

Kavanaugh's character from those who have worked with him and socialized with him, dating all the way back to high school. But Democrats wouldn't let a few inconvenient things—like a complete lack of evidence or an accuser's request for confidentiality—get between them and a good smear. It is despicable.

The contrast with the completely professional conduct of Chairman GRASSLEY could not be starker. As soon as Chairman GRASSLEY learned about this allegation, he handled it through proper channels. He immediately began gathering the facts. His office promptly conducted a transcribed interview of Judge Kavanaugh, in which, under penalty of felony, he unequivocally denied the last-minute allegation. The office received statements from all the other supposed witnesses, who either directly contradicted the story or denied knowing anything about it.

What is more, Chairman GRASSLEY ensured that Dr. Ford could be heard in a forum of her own choosing—either here or in California; either in public or in private; either with the staff or with the Members. He has gone above and beyond to accommodate her request. Thanks to him, we have a fair and open hearing scheduled for Thursday. Dr. Ford will be able to state her allegation under oath, and Judge Kavanaugh will be able to respond.

But the smear campaign didn't stop there; that was just act one. According to the reporter of this second allegation, the accuser "came forward because Senate Democrats began looking." And now they are calling for even further delays and further obstruction over a second decades-old allegation that is so thin and so unsupported that the New York Times refused to even run a story about it. This claim is so dubious that the New York Times passed on the story entirely after having looked into it.

Here is why the New York Times declined to publish: It "interviewed several dozen people over the past week in an attempt to corroborate her story and could find no one with firsthand knowledge"—not one person "with firsthand knowledge" to support the allegation—but, rather, multiple, on-the-record denials again. The Times also reported that the claimant said she herself is uncertain of her claim. That is the New York Times, whose credo is "all the news that's fit to print," and it found this latest last-minute allegation not even fit to print.

Oh, but that hasn't stopped Judiciary Committee Democrats from shoveling it into their smear campaign and demanding further delays. They kept this one a secret from Republicans, too, by the way. Evidently, several Democratic offices knew of this allegation for at least a week, but as with Dr. Ford's claim, they sat on this one, too, so the committee could not take any proper action. They just wanted it to wind up in the press—another orchestrated,

last-minute hit on the nominee. Now they are acting like it is a legitimate reason to delay things even further, as though they have not already announced themselves as being completely opposed to this nomination anyway, as if they have not already promised the far left they would lead the fight to bring this nomination down whatever it took, whatever the cost.

Let's put aside this last-minute, unsubstantiated smear. Let's return to the facts. Let's have a fair hearing on Thursday.

Here are the facts that we do have: Hundreds of men and women who have known Brett Kavanaugh across his life have written or spoken out that he is a man of strong character and tremendous integrity. Numerous witnesses have testified before the Judiciary Committee that he is a trusted mentor, a loyal friend, and a lifelong champion of women. More than 75 women gathered last week to share their decades-old knowledge of Judge Kavanaugh as a "responsible guy who treated us with kindness and respect" and as a "true gentleman in all aspects of his life."

Separately, of course, it remains beyond reasonable dispute that Judge Kavanaugh's legal brilliance and excellence on the bench make him one of the very most qualified Supreme Court nominees in the history of our country.

All of these facts are, quite clearly, on one side. Maybe that is why the Democrats are so panicked. Maybe that is why they are so willing to try to bring down this nominee. In the meantime, a good and honorable man and his family are receiving death threats. They are the subject of smears and are facing Senate Democrats who say he has no presumption of innocence because they don't agree with his judicial philosophy.

Well, before the week is out, both Judge Kavanaugh and Dr. Ford will testify under oath before the Judiciary Committee. Chairman GRASSLEY has made sure the facts will be heard, and Judge Kavanaugh and the American people deserve nothing less. I want to make it perfectly clear that Judge Kavanaugh will be voted on here, up or down, on the Senate floor. This fine nominee to the Supreme Court will receive a vote in this Senate in the near future.

APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, on an entirely different matter, last week, our efforts to restore regular appropriations hit another milestone. The President signed into law our first appropriations package. It will fund critical efforts in energy research and security, waterways and infrastructure projects, and in improving care at the VA.

Earlier this month, the Senate passed the conference report that will fund the Departments of Defense, Labor, Health and Human Services,

and Education. We anticipate that the House will take up the package this week, and work continues on other important legislation.

Soon, we will act to provide long-term stability and reforms to the Federal Aviation Administration, the Transportation Security Administration, and the National Transportation Safety Board. We will also take up America's Water Infrastructure Act, which will bolster the efforts of the Army Corps of Engineers and make commitments to improving water quality and advancing hydropower.

Most immediately, we will continue to process the President's well-qualified nominees. We are, today, considering Jackie Wolcott to serve as U.S. Representative to the International Atomic Energy Agency and as U.S. Representative to the United Nations in Vienna. I urge all of our colleagues to join me in voting to confirm her.

TRIBUTE TO DAN SULLIVAN

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, on one final matter, over the Senate's history, we have welcomed into our ranks many brave men and women who have served in uniform. From the earliest days of our Republic, when veterans of the Revolution laid down their arms to serve as legislators, the Senate has been the home of patriots who know the true meaning of service and sacrifice. Some of our colleagues have even decided to pull double duty—continuing to serve in the Reserves while suffering the slings and arrows here in the Senate.

We have, today, a unique opportunity to honor one of these colleagues. Earlier this month, the news came that our friend, the junior Senator from Alaska, had attained the rank of colonel in the U.S. Marine Corps Forces Reserve. DAN SULLIVAN has spent the last quarter century as a marine, earning the Defense Meritorious Service Medal and serving on Active Duty in Afghanistan. Those of us who serve here with Senator SULLIVAN are hardly surprised that someone so "squared away" has risen to this milestone.

His promotion is recognized in a special ceremony today here in the Capitol, where, I understand, Senator SULLIVAN's father will pin on his new rank.

I know this body will join me in congratulating him and in thanking both Senator SULLIVAN and Colonel SULLIVAN for all of his service to the Nation.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. 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 Utah.

NOMINATION OF BRETT KAVANAUGH

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I appreciate the majority leader's remarks in a wide variety of ways. What a great leader he is. We all should pay very strict attention to the way he handles himself and his seriousness about our U.S. Senate.

Last night, Senate Democrats continued their smear campaign against Judge Brett Kavanaugh with a thinly sourced article that accuses Judge Kavanaugh of conduct that no eyewitness can even corroborate. Rather than having brought the matter to the attention of committee investigators, Democrats coordinated with the members of the media to drop the story in the most dramatic and damaging way possible. This continues the Senate Democrats' pattern of playing hide the ball—after having spent 6 weeks sitting on a letter regarding alleged conduct while Judge Kavanaugh was in high school—before leaking it to the press.

Senate Democrats will stop at nothing to prevent Judge Kavanaugh's confirmation. As reported by the author of last night's article, the individual in the piece came forward only because Senate Democrats "came looking." Even then, the individual went on the record only after "six days of carefully assessing her memories and consulting with her attorney"—a former Democratic elected official. The New York Times, which declined to publish the allegations when approached, reported that it had interviewed "several dozen people . . . in an attempt to corroborate the story" and could find "no one with firsthand knowledge." The Times further reported that the individual in the story had herself contacted former classmates in an effort to corroborate the story and had "told some of them that she could not be certain Mr. Kavanaugh was the one who exposed himself."

Unsurprisingly, Senate Democrats are now using last night's article as an excuse to call for further delays. This follows the same approach they have taken since Judge Kavanaugh's nomination had first been announced. No innuendo has been too low, no insinuation too dirty. Everything is an excuse for delay no matter how unsubstantiated. It does not matter that no other eyewitness can even confirm that Judge Kavanaugh was at the party in question. It does not matter that every other individual alleged to be present denies any memory of the event. The goal is to delay—nothing new to most of us. It should be clear now to all Americans that Democrats are engaged in a coordinated effort to stop Judge Kavanaugh's confirmation by any means possible.

As I have said before, every accuser deserves to be heard. Moreover, a person who has committed sexual assault should not serve on the U.S. Supreme

Court. Yet the way my Democratic colleagues have approached these allegations makes clear that the driving objective here is not the truth but is politics. Rather than having worked with Republican colleagues to investigate Dr. Ford's allegations, they sat on them for 6 weeks until the eve of Judge Kavanaugh's confirmation vote and then leaked them to the press. Rather than having brought last night's allegations to the attention of committee investigators, they back-channeled them to the media and then denied any involvement. Such underhanded tactics are not fair to Judge Kavanaugh, are not fair to the individuals in the stories, and are not fair to the American people.

Senate Democrats are demeaning both the Senate and the Supreme Court through their partisan games and transparent attempts at character assassination. As planned, we will hear and should hear from Dr. Ford on Thursday. Then we should vote, and there should be no frivolous approaches toward the U.S. Senate or toward this confirmation process.

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

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

NATIONAL FLOOD INSURANCE PROGRAM REAUTHORIZATION

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I begin my remarks today by offering my heartfelt sympathy to those in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia who were battered by Hurricane Florence over the past several weeks and who are still feeling the aftermath of that storm. Unfortunately, people in Louisiana know more than a little bit about the damage to life and property that these natural disasters can do.

The road to recovery may be long, but we have your back. That is the message that I want to give to our fellow Americans who were in the path of Hurricane Florence. Don't give up. You are going to want to. Don't. Failure is not falling down. Failure is not getting back up.

Today, I wish to talk a little bit about the National Flood Insurance Program. Weathering a hurricane is difficult enough without the added burden of having to do it without insurance. Our National Flood Insurance Program isn't doing its job if it is so expensive that people can't afford to buy it.

Unfortunately, that is precisely the case for many of our people in North and South Carolina. In spite of a robust economy—4 million new jobs in 20 months and 4.1 percent in gross domes-

tic product growth—and in spite of a booming population in our country, fewer people in the Carolinas can afford to insure their property today than in the year 2013. We should be ashamed of that.

Experts estimate that fewer than 10 percent of the households affected by Hurricane Florence have flood insurance at all. So 90 percent do not. Making matters worse, in North Carolina today there are 3.6 percent fewer NFIP policies in place than there were in 2013. Over that same period of time, North Carolina's population has increased by 620,000 people.

South Carolina tells a similar story. Today, there are 1.2 percent fewer policies than in 2013, despite South Carolina having 350,000 more people. This is the exact same story—the exact same story—that we saw in Texas last year, where 80 percent of homeowners in the eight hardest hit counties had absolutely no flood insurance. That is four out of every five people.

Why don't people have flood insurance? There are a variety of reasons, but because the costs are out of control and middle-class families have little choice but to just roll the dice is the main reason. Why is that? Because Congress keeps playing games, and people don't have faith that the NFIP will be around to pay off. It is also because some people want to get a sound bite more than they want to help ordinary Americans protect one of their most valuable possessions—and, in most cases, their most valuable possession—their home. If those people want to reform the program because they want to save the government money, which is a laudable goal—and some do—they are going about it the wrong way.

The reality is that the National Flood Insurance Program is the only place—the only place—where people can turn to insure their home and their belongings.

Now, 98.5 percent of all NFIP policies are in counties or parishes with a median household income below \$100,000. So this argument we often hear that the National Flood Insurance Program is just a subsidy for wealthy people and their beach homes is nonsense. It is nonsense on a stick. And 62 percent of all of the people enrolled in the NFIP program are in counties or parishes with a median household income below the national average of \$53,889. Last year, many folks saw the premiums for their homes and businesses increase between 8 and 25 percent.

Floods are the most common and, unfortunately, the most costly natural disaster. If your home takes on water, your homeowner's insurance is not going to help you. Let me say that again. If your home floods and you have homeowner's insurance, you will not be covered. Homeowner's insurance does not cover the cost of a flood. If you don't have insurance, FEMA's disaster dollars aren't going to foot the bill for a full recovery. They aren't.

Even if you are eligible for Federal disaster assistance—for example, a