

loan or a grant—it will be years before you will see those funds. What are flood victims supposed to do in the meantime? They can't just simply sit on an empty lot and wait. Life goes on.

Hurricane Florence is just one in a long line of storms that have devastated Americans families. I am not just talking about massive hurricanes such as Katrina, Rita, and Sandy. Unnamed floods in the spring and summer of 2016 ravaged 56 of the 64 parishes or counties in my State. In parts of my State in 2016, we had folks who endured 20 inches of rain in 2 days. I don't care if you live on Pikes Peak. If you get 20 inches of rain in 2 days, you are going to flood, even if you are not near a body of water. That is just a fact.

In the wake of Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria last year, I thought my colleagues might have seen the light and might have come to the table to discuss a long-term sustainable and reasonable bill to reform the NFIP, but, unfortunately, that couldn't be further from reality.

Congress has not only refused to debate comprehensive National Flood Insurance Program reform, but the program nearly lapsed. Congress has had well over a year to lay out a plan. Yet it still refuses to do so because one or two Members want to hold up progress. Unfortunately, it is ordinary people like the good people of North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, Louisiana, and Texas who are feeling the pain of those politics.

Recovering from a natural disaster is more than just putting up drywall. It is about communities coming back safer, stronger, and better prepared. The NFIP is an indispensable part of that effort to rebuild, but a flood insurance program isn't useful if it is too complicated to understand or if it allows bad actors to take from hard-working families.

We need rules for the flood insurance program that make sense. We need government websites that a normal person can navigate. We need quicker decisions by bureaucrats, and a faster process to get disaster dollars to the people who need them. Most importantly, though, people need to be able to afford the flood insurance.

I understand the National Flood Insurance Program is running a deficit. As you can see, we have had an extraordinary number of storms, and I understand that it needs to be put back into sound, fiscal shape. But raising the price of the product so high so that people can't afford the insurance is not going to achieve that. It is going to undermine the entire purpose of the flood insurance program.

I suggest that what we have to do is to strike a balance between fiscal stability and longevity of the program and affordability for the people who are supposed to be served by it. We have no choice but to get the program fiscally stable, but also we have no choice but to get premiums under control, and reform is the only path forward. The status quo is not working.

When Congress established the NFIP, we made a promise. We promised 5 million Americans—that is how many policyholders we have—including half a million people in my State and 350,000 people in North and South Carolina, that we would be there to help should disaster strike, and it is high time that the Congress show people that we meant it.

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. BOOZMAN. 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 RICE MONTH

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, September is National Rice Month. In Arkansas, this is certainly reason to celebrate. My home State has the proud distinction of being the Nation's leader in rice production, producing about half of the U.S. rice crop in America. Arkansas rice producers not only provide a safe, reliable food source that helps feed the world but also helps drive the State's economy.

Arkansas rice farmers support nearly 15,000 jobs and, on average, contribute \$2.3 billion to the State's economic output. Rice milling operations and forward market linkages in Arkansas account for more than \$3 billion in total output of goods and services.

These are impressive numbers for an integral component to Arkansas' economy and part of the reason why the industry was recognized by Gov. Asa Hutchinson, who signed the Rice Month proclamation in early September. As a leader in production, Arkansas rice farmers have a unique role in the industry and in the ongoing research to support its continued success in the State.

The University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture is a leading research entity on rice production. Its Rice Research and Extension Center is recognized worldwide for developing solutions to the challenges facing producers, establishing techniques and best practices that help advance the rice industry.

The strong partnership between education and industry is crucial to leveraging the investment made in rice research. This cooperation helps improve the rice crop and increase farmers' yields, as well as makes rice production more efficient.

This collaboration is also seen in conservation efforts. Rice farmers are leaders in sustainability. Over the last two decades, rice producers have been able to increase their yields by more than 50 percent, with improved quality, while reducing land use by 35 percent, energy use by 38 percent, and water use by 53 percent.

In addition to being good stewards of the environment, rice farmers provide

critical habitat for ducks and other waterfowl. Organizations like Ducks Unlimited have formed a relationship with rice farmers through the Rice Stewardship to improve conservation practices that help shape the habitat for waterfowl. Flooded rice fields have become great locations for hunters. When these outdoorsmen visit Arkansas to take advantage of our natural resources, they pump money into our local economies.

As a duck hunting destination, it is critically important that we protect waterfowl habitats in Arkansas so we can continue to attract sports men and women to our State.

Congress can help our rice farmers continue these good practices by passing a farm bill that includes our robust conservation title.

During my annual ag tour in Arkansas last month, I visited with rice farmers, researchers, and rice industry leaders. They shared with me how the farm bill can work better for them. We can improve crop insurance to make the policy work better for our rice farmers. They need a strong farm safety net, and they asked that Washington protect the markets they have and work to open new markets like trade with Cuba.

I am proud to craft and promote policies that help our rice farmers, and I will continue to be an advocate for the industry. This month is the perfect time to celebrate the rice industry and the many positive contributions it makes to Arkansas.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.
The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. ERNST). The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam 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 PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

NOMINATION OF BRETT KAVANAUGH

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, in the confirmation of any Supreme Court nominee, it is the Senate's job to carefully and thoroughly review the nominee's credentials, beliefs, background, and suitability for the position. Once confirmed, a Supreme Court Justice is not subject to review or to term limits. It is a lifetime appointment with immense responsibilities and powers. We have to examine any Supreme Court nominee in light of those facts.

Dr. Christina Blasey Ford has come forward with a credible allegation that Judge Kavanaugh is guilty of sexual misconduct. I believe her, but regardless of what you believe, she deserves to be heard in a deliberate and impartial manner, in a way that is dignified

and respectful to both sides and to her, with as much independently verified information gathered beforehand as possible. And now, of course, there are additional allegations about Judge Kavanaugh's actions that should be examined.

There is one simple way to get to the bottom of this without the he said, she said, without the finger-pointing and name-calling: a quiet, serious, thorough background check by the FBI. That is the logical way to go. The FBI is not biased. The FBI is professional. It is a crime to lie to them, so people have a large incentive to tell the truth.

Reopening an FBI investigation is a routine practice for judicial nominations. It has happened over and over again when new information has come up, and it only takes a short time to complete. It should be quiet, serious, and get the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

If my Republican friends are so concerned about this process being chaotic, they should want the FBI to handle these allegations because the FBI can conduct this investigation soberly, effectively, and discreetly. In fact, there is really only one way to get to the bottom of these allegations and prevent the Nation from being thrown into further turmoil—an independent background check by the FBI. On the one hand, our Republican colleagues decry the turmoil, but on the other hand, they avoid the careful, best, serious way to get at the allegations—a background check investigation by the FBI.

For some reason, both the White House and Senate Republicans are blocking an FBI investigation and questioning its purpose. Let me ask our Republican friends, President Trump, and America this question: If President Trump and Senate Republicans are so certain the allegations against Judge Kavanaugh aren't true, why aren't they welcoming the FBI to look into it?

Leader McCONNELL, you spent 5 minutes pointing your finger at Democrats. That shows someone who is in a pickle. That shows someone who has dug a deep hole. If you really believe these allegations are part of a despicable smear job, Leader McCONNELL, why don't you call for an FBI investigation? What are you afraid of? What are you hiding?

What is Judge Kavanaugh hiding? Nobody knows. But people who want the truth will find a truth teller. People who don't want the truth will run away from a truth teller and instead point fingers of accusation and wild, untethered allegations. That is what Leader McCONNELL is doing. It is not a great moment. I know he prizes his role in ramming through these right-wing Justices. That is part of his legacy. I don't think America will see it that way a few years from now when we see their rulings. There will be a huge backlash if Kavanaugh should get on the Court and they should rule the

way they have ruled in the past. But that is not the search for truth; that is the search for a rush job to avoid the truth. It should not happen.

Think about it. The White House is blocking an impartial investigation of Dr. Ford's allegation. Chairman GRASSLEY is setting arbitrary deadlines for Dr. Ford to testify, dictating the terms of her appearance, and denying her and the minority the right to call other witnesses, which always happens at hearings, including an alleged eyewitness. There was someone in the room. By press reports, he is backing up Kavanaugh. Why are they afraid to have him testify? Or at least he is saying he doesn't remember.

We are hearing that Chairman GRASSLEY now wants to bring in outside counsel to conduct the questioning, as if Dr. Ford were on trial, as if Republicans were afraid to question Dr. Ford. This is so unusual, but it shows a fear on the part of our Republican friends that something bad and truthful will come out.

If Chairman GRASSLEY and Leader McCONNELL continue down this road, we are heading for a hearing that will be far from what a serious factfinding inquiry should look like, far from respectful to Dr. Ford, and far from fair.

Given the circumstances, the American people should ask—particularly those who support Judge Kavanaugh—who is more credible: Dr. Ford, who wants the FBI to investigate her allegation because she is confident it will corroborate her account, or our Republican friends who are running away from any objective factfinding and truth?

Remember, it is Dr. Ford who not only wants the FBI to look into this, she took a voluntary lie detector test, and she knew she was inviting harassment and ridicule and abuse for coming forward. She has gotten death threats. She has had to move out of her house. She feared her life would be upended, and it is. She still had the courage to do this. We certainly owe her some dignity and a fair hearing, not the kind of rushed, almost kangaroo court-style hearing where the Members on the Republican side are afraid to even ask her questions and confront her while they will say things behind her back.

Who is more credible? Is it Dr. Ford, who is willing to submit to all this, or Republicans in the White House, who are stonewalling an FBI investigation into facts and who are refusing to call other witnesses to Dr. Ford's hearing, including the alleged eyewitness? Republicans or Democrats? There is an easy, easy answer to all of these. So when Leader McCONNELL rails and rants about Democrats, he is setting up a straw man. He is afraid of what might come out, what the truth is, it seems to me.

We have heard Judge Kavanaugh's defenders say: This happened 36 years ago; it shouldn't matter. We have heard new, tortured formulations of that shopworn excuse that boys will be

boys. I don't agree with any of those voices, any of those excuses, but let me address those who think that, people who think: This was a long time ago. Boys did this. Let's not hold someone accountable for it 30 years later, or at least let's not stop his advancement in his career.

One obvious answer is, it is the Supreme Court. But I would ask those who believe that Kavanaugh is not being treated fairly to examine one more point: his credibility. Whether you think what happened 36 years ago is enough to remove him from consideration of the Supreme Court, as I do, or whether you don't, credibility of a Supreme Court nominee is extremely important.

Judge Kavanaugh has unequivocally denied this. He didn't say, like Mr. Judge, "I can't remember. Maybe I had too many to drink, and my recollection isn't great"; he unequivocally denied it. And this comes on top of the fact that Judge Kavanaugh's testimony had real issues with credibility. Is Judge Kavanaugh again denying the truth because his confirmation to the U.S. Supreme Court hangs in the balance? The credibility of Judge Kavanaugh, given his previous testimony, given how he skirted the truth, at the very minimum, on issues such as appointment of certain judges, on torture, on Manny Miranda—and now he says this, an unequivocal denial?

Let's assume that after the testimony of Dr. Ford, most Americans believe it to be true. How would we want to appoint Judge Kavanaugh—because he would have abjectly lied—if they believe it is true?

So there is the issue of credibility. Beyond the weight that different people give what happened 30-some-odd years ago, beyond the weight of whether people excuse or don't excuse the behavior—I don't excuse it—is the issue that looms: credibility. Is Judge Kavanaugh the kind of upright, straightforward individual we want on the Bench? Do his flirtations with avoiding the truth in his testimony—is this just another, even worse indication that he does not have the judgment, the moral character, the credibility for a job that requires all three?

In summation, in the face of multiple allegations against Judge Kavanaugh, the FBI should reopen the background check investigation, and we should conduct a hearing where the appropriate witnesses are called and respect is given to both the accuser and the accused. Anything less will be viewed by the American people and I believe judged by history as a stain on Republicans in the Senate and a stain on the integrity of the majesty of the Supreme Court.

I yield the floor.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MORAN). Morning business is closed.