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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable CINDY HYDE-SMITH, a Senator from the State of Mississippi.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, You are our help in ages past and our hope for years to come. We find consolation from the knowledge that our times are in Your hands. Forgive us when we doubt Your power, mercy, and love.

Bless our lawmakers. Help them to remember that You love them so much that You want what is best for them. You are so wise that You know what is best for them and so powerful that You can bring about what is for their ultimate good. Give each of our Senators a fresh burst of enthusiasm for the next stage in the unfolding scene of the American Dream.

We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, November 15, 2018.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby

appoint the Honorable CINDY HYDE-SMITH, a Senator from the State of Mississippi, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ORRIN G. HATCH,
President pro tempore.

Mrs. HYDE-SMITH thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. 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.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Democratic leader is recognized.

DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, the President of the United States swears an oath to protect and defend the Constitution, including bedrock principles like the rule of law and the sanctity of our elections. But nearly every day, President Trump ignores this fundamental responsibility and tramples on the values that have made our country the light of the world. No President has come close to defaming and trying to destroy the democratic values of this country. No President has come close—none.

This morning, for what seemed like the millionth time, the President angrily, wildly, and baselessly ranted about the special counsel's investigation. It doesn't matter to him that his

claims have no basis. It doesn't matter to him that his words may degrade faith in our independent law enforcement agencies and the rule of law. He proceeds only according to self-interest. He is offended that someone might look into the fact that he did something wrong—this happens with every President—and he lashes out in ways that hurt our democracy permanently.

Just look at how over the past few weeks President Trump has tried to intimidate and bully election officials in Florida and Arizona with fantastical claims of voter fraud. It doesn't matter to him that there is no evidence to the charges. It doesn't matter to him that in both States—Arizona and Florida—Republican officials have said there is no fraud, debunking the President's claims. It doesn't matter to him that his claims erode faith in the integrity of our elections among a segment of his supporters. If the President thinks it will help him personally, he will say it.

One of the most recent examples of this just happened yesterday. The President keeps getting more and more absurd. He makes things up. He most recently claimed in an interview with the Daily Caller that "illegal" voters "go to their car, put on a different hat, put on a different shirt, and vote again."

Name one. Name a few. When did it happen and when? Or did you just read this on some rightwing, nasty, dishonest blog and just repeat it? Donald Trump, you are the President of the United States. Because you read something in a blog that has no basis in fact, you don't have the right to repeat it, if you are President and behaving Presidentially, and yet he does it over and over. It is the height of irresponsibility.

Since his first day in office, President Trump has made these ridiculous claims about voter fraud that even his sham voting commission, led by Kris Kobach, couldn't prove. The real disgrace is how low the President and

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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some Republicans will stoop to prevent American citizens from exercising their right to vote and how far they will go to undermine faith in our democracy, even to the point of disenfranchising military voters—people who may be overseas defending our freedom, risking their lives, who want to vote—and if their ballots don't come in at exactly the right moment, they shouldn't be counted—disgraceful.

The tendency is to treat the President's words as an extension of our modern, partisan politics. Well, we have too much partisan politics, but the truth is that the President's blatant disregard for basic norms, constitutional constraints, and truth is unique to him. No President has come close to going as far to destroy democratic norms. He is doing severe and possibly irreparable damage to our democracy all to suit his goal and often, it seems, just his ego.

Democrats condemn this behavior, but where are our Republican friends? They should know better. They do know better. I hear the private chatter. The silence of the Republican majority as the President takes an ax to democratic norms will go down as one of the least bright moments in the history of the Republican Party. It will go down as one of the bad marks in the history of the Senate, and we don't hear a peep. Are our Republican colleagues afraid? Are they just being mercenary? After this last election, I wouldn't think that would be the case. Trump didn't lead them to overwhelming victory. When are we going to hear from them?

This is not an issue of partisanship. When a President, Democrat or Republican, does so much to destroy democratic norms and does so much to just make up things—like that people went into a car and put on a different hat to vote—where are our colleagues decrying this, at least saying that the President shouldn't do it? They are embracing a President whom they know has done so many bad things. I am not talking ideologically. I am talking about honor and respect for democracy. It is something they should not be proud of.

RUSSIA INVESTIGATION

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, now, on the Russia investigation itself. There is this idea out there on the Republican side that the President doesn't intend to interfere with the Russia investigation. Republicans, including my friend the Republican leader, say President Trump has not threatened the special counsel investigation, and so there is no need to protect it. That is a laugh. He threatens the investigation almost every day. He did this morning in his tweets. To say that the President hasn't threatened the special counsel is not only logically dubious, but it is just dead wrong and untrue.

A few weeks ago, President Trump said the investigation "should end."

This morning, again, President Trump made clear that he does not want the Mueller investigation to reach a fair and impartial conclusion. Last week, President Trump went around the traditional line of succession in the Justice Department—what many believe to be a violation of the Constitution—to install an Acting Attorney General whose only qualification for the job seems to be that he has publicly criticized the Russia probe.

My friends—particularly my friends, again, on the Republican side—the writing is on the wall. Let's avoid this constitutional crisis. Let's at least stand up for the rule of law. We should pass legislation now, in the lameduck, to protect the special counsel's investigation from the President and from his woefully unqualified henchman, Mr. Whitaker.

Senators FLAKE and COONS tried yesterday—bipartisan—but the Republican leader objected. They are going to keep trying, as they should, and Democrats will try to add this proposal to the must-pass spending bill because we believe it is so important for our democracy. There is too much at stake to sit around and wait until the President crosses the line, creating the constitutional crisis we all abhor.

But waiting until that happens would be too late. We need to act on legislation to protect the special counsel, to protect the rule of law, and to protect democracy, accountability, and the fundamental checks and balances that is the hallmark of our great Nation.

CHISHOLM RESOLUTION

Mr. SCHUMER. Finally, last Tuesday's election was historic for not only the number of ballots cast by Americans in the midterms but also for whom those ballots were cast. Americans sent to our Nation's Capital the most diverse Congress in the history of the country. In several States, the first Native American women, the first African-American women, and the first Muslim women were elected in the history of those States. Finally, the men and women walking the corridors of power are beginning to look more like the Nation they represent, at least on our side of the aisle, I am proud to say. We are not there yet, but we are a lot closer.

In light of this progress, it is perhaps fitting that exactly half a century ago, a fellow Brooklynite, Shirley Chisolm, became the first African-American woman elected to Congress and eventually the first African-American woman to run for a major party's nomination for President, breaking that glass ceiling and paving the way for so many others to follow. Whether they know Shirley Chisolm or not, so many who are elected on the other side in the House of Representatives owe a lot to her, as do all Americans.

So I have introduced a resolution in the Senate, along with my friends in the House—Representative YVETTE

CLARKE, my Congresswoman whom I was proud to vote for in November, and BARBARA LEE of California—to honor Shirley Chisolm's achievements and her legacy of public service.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

NATIONAL DEFENSE STRATEGY COMMISSION REPORT

Mr. KYLE. Madam President, yesterday the National Defense Strategy Commission released its report after about a year of study for the defense needs of the United States and our future requirements for defense strategy and funding of that strategy. I had the honor of serving on that commission during the time that preceded my current presence in the U.S. Senate.

The Commission was appointed by the chairmen and ranking members of the House and Senate Armed Services Committee. There were six appointed from each of the two bodies, so a total of 12, and it was a division equally between Republicans and Democrats. I was privileged to have been appointed by my predecessor, Senator John McCain.

The commission is chaired by Ambassador Eric Edelman and Admiral Gary Roughead, Retired, and it included defense experts who had served in Congress, who had served in the intelligence community, the diplomatic community, and the military. There was one former political person—myself. As I said, we were tasked with the job of studying our National Defense Strategy and providing recommendations to the Secretary of Defense and to the Congress about our future courses of action.

The Commission worked very hard to review all of the pertinent information related to the formation of the Trump administration National Defense Strategy, which had been issued earlier in the year. This effort included examining the assumptions, the missions, the force posture, the structure, as well as strategic and military risks associated with the execution of that National Defense Strategy.

The Commission particularly focused on threats to the United States and the size and shape of the force required to deter and, if necessary, defeat these threats. It focused on the readiness of our force, the posture and capabilities of the force, and the allocation of resources. It also examined the strategic and military risks that informed the development of both the National Defense Strategy and the National Security Strategy.

This Commission has demonstrated that, even in Washington, DC, it is possible to get a genuinely bipartisan consensus on something—in this case, our