

Mr. MCCONNELL. In order to place the bills on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I object to further proceedings en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection having been heard, the bills will be placed on the calendar.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative 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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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.

MUELLER REPORT

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I have just listened to my friend the majority leader engage in an astounding bit of whitewash—not unexpected but entirely unconvincing.

Yes, the Mueller investigation took 2 years, and, yes, it produced a stunning document in the end—not only a damning appraisal of our election security and just how willing a major Presidential campaign was to accept and amplify the disinformation of a foreign adversary but also a thorough examination of the behavior of a lawless President, who at least on 11 occasions, according to the report, may have obstructed a Federal investigation.

So while my friend the majority leader wants to say “case closed”—I don’t blame them—375 former Federal prosecutors looked at the Mueller report and said publicly that the conduct of the President amounts to felony obstruction of justice. In any other case, were he not President, those prosecutors would have recommended bringing charges.

Our leader saying “Let’s move on” is sort of like Richard Nixon saying “Let’s move on” at the height of the investigation of his wrongdoing. Of course he wants to move on. He wants to cover it up. He wants silence on one of the most serious issues we face—whether a foreign power can manipulate our elections, the wellspring of our democracy.

If the leader is sincere, then put election security on the floor. Let’s debate it. Put sanctions on Russia on the floor. Let’s debate it. He doesn’t want to move on; he wants to run away from these awful facts that relate to the wellspring of our democracy—foreign interference in our election and a President who is lawless. That is what he wants to push under the rug.

Of course, he would say this is all done. It is not done. If Russia interferes in 2020, it is not done. If this President or future Presidents believe

that they can avoid the law and even break the law—at least according to 375 prosecutors—it is not done. This is very serious stuff.

The leader bemoans “breathless conspiracy theorizing.” For a moment, I thought he was referring to the President and to those House and Senate Republicans who for 2 years intentionally sought to undercut Mueller’s investigation by peddling farfetched conspiracy theories about deep state “coups,” unmasking scandals, and uranium purchases to muddy the waters. I guess he meant something about Democrats. But I don’t remember the Republican leader bemoaning those breathless conspiracies; nor do I remember the Republican leader or the Republican Senators having such a distaste for congressional oversight during the Obama administration. On things far less serious, they were relentless in wanting investigations. Now they say “never mind” when the wellspring of our democracy is at stake, there is foreign interference in our elections, and a President who just disobeys the law. The leader sure acted differently a few years back.

What I remember is that from the very beginning, the Republican leader has not taken the threat of Russia’s election interference as seriously as he should. In the run-up to the 2016 election, when the Obama administration sought to warn State election officials about foreign meddling and designate election systems as “critical infrastructure,” Leader MCCONNELL reportedly delayed for weeks, “watered down” the letter from congressional leaders, and pushed back against the designation. Yes, I would have swept this under the rug if I had done that. I wouldn’t want to keep talking about it.

Despite 2 years in charge of the Senate since the 2016 election, Leader MCCONNELL has pursued additional election security only after being prodded by Democrats, and it has been half-baked at that.

Leader MCCONNELL thwarted the Rules Committee from marking up the bipartisan legislation designed to enhance election security.

At the beginning of the year, 42 Republicans, including Leader MCCONNELL, essentially voted in favor of the administration’s proposal to weaken sanctions against Russia.

In the last round of negotiations, Senate Republicans blocked our attempt to fund additional efforts to make our election safe in 2020.

Now, despite a preponderance of testimony from our intelligence officials—not politicians; intelligence officials who are in charge of our security and well-being—they testified that foreign powers are ramping up to interfere in our next election. The Senate has done nothing to grapple with the problem, even as minimal of a request as I made to the leader: an all-Senators’ classified briefing from our defense and intelligence leaders so that the Senate understands what we need to do to pro-

tect American in 2020 and beyond. I have been asking for 2 weeks, and we still haven’t gotten action.

Let’s bring the bipartisan Secure Elections Act to the floor and debate and amend. Let’s strengthen sanctions against Putin and any other adversary who would dare to interfere with the sanctity of our elections.

Regardless of what you believe about the President’s conduct, we should all—every single Democrat and every single Republican—be working to ensure that what happened in 2016 never happens again. We can debate how much of an effect it had, but we sure don’t want it to be worse—whatever it was—in 2020 than it was in 2016. And the leader sits on his hands, does nothing, creates a legislative graveyard for these and every other issue, and then says: Let’s move on. No way. No way. We can do both. We can make our elections more secure. We can examine what happened so we can make them more secure and do other issues. So far, Leader MCCONNELL is doing neither.

What we have here is very simple. What we have here is a concerted effort to circle the wagons to protect the President from accountability, to whitewash his reprehensible conduct by simply declaring it irrelevant. In that effort, the leader and Senate Republicans are falling down drastically on their constitutional duty to provide oversight and, I fear, to defend the national interest as well.

SENATE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, let me now talk about something related—the legislative graveyard.

Leader MCCONNELL says: Let’s move on and work together. There hasn’t been a single bill put on the floor on issues we can debate, whether it is protecting preexisting conditions, making our education system better, dealing with the problem of the high cost of drugs, doing infrastructure—nothing. Just appointments have been put on the floor. And nothing has been done on election security at the very minimum.

I know the leader is afraid to debate what happened and explore what happened given the tawdry history of certainly President Trump and of Senate Republicans in responding to this serious issue, but at least he could move forward and we could put some bills on the floor and debate them to strengthen our election security, which everyone admits is weak.

So if Leader MCCONNELL, as he says, is ready to move on to serious things, then how about bringing forward legislation to protect our elections? For 4 months, the Senate has been little more than a legislative graveyard, and election security is exhibit A.

The House passed important reforms to improve and safeguard our elections. No action here in the Senate. We have a bipartisan election security bill waiting in committee. No movement from the leader.

As long as this place remains a legislative graveyard, we are rolling out the welcome mat for foreign adversaries—not just Russia but Iran, Turkey, North Korea, China—to interfere in our elections. We are essentially encouraging a sequel to 2016 because the leader is sitting on his hands, because the leader is presiding over a legislative graveyard on election security and just about everything else. What about bipartisan background checks? What about paycheck fairness? What about election reform? What about even the Violence Against Women Act, which passed the House with 33 Republicans? None of those are being put on the floor so that we can act and debate.

Later this morning, my friend Senator UDALL will come here to the floor to press our Republican friends to take up this bill and shed light on the fact that it includes long-overdue reforms to protect Native American women. The House is moving on legislation this week to protect our healthcare law and protections for Americans with pre-existing conditions from the administration's efforts to destroy those protections. There is no reason for Leader MCCONNELL, who says he wants to move on, to let these bills collect dust in the Senate. Even if he doesn't love every particular in these bills, why not bring them to the floor to debate and amend? Surely, we could find a way to agree on issues. Ninety, ninety-five percent of Americans agree on every one of these. But the Republican Party and Leader MCCONNELL are so in the grasp of powerful special interests and lobbyists from the hard right that they are afraid to move any of this.

DISASTER RELIEF

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, on disaster, last week, the city of Davenport in Iowa became the site of the latest national disaster to wreak havoc on our homeland. It has been 8 weeks since the Midwest began battling major flooding, 6 months since the last major wildfire in California, 12 months since a volcano erupted in Hawaii, and over a year and a half since Hurricanes Irma and Maria devastated the island of Puerto Rico. But because the President has stubbornly and inexplicably opposed aid to Puerto Rico, a comprehensive disaster package has failed to get the necessary support of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, of a majority in the House, and has languished in the Congress.

Unfortunately, the President continues to belittle Puerto Rico and tell flat-out mistruths about the level of support they are receiving. Just yesterday, the President said the people of Puerto Rico "should be very happy" with what he has done for them so far. Well, don't ask me. Ask the Governor of Puerto Rico—hardly a left-wing, partisan Democrat; ask the mayor of San Juan; ask the people of Puerto Rico if they are happy. Don't put words in their mouths. Ask them if they are

happy with the support they have received from this administration. Ask them if they are happy with HUD's missing its own deadline to advance the release of \$8 billion in disaster mitigation funding last week. Ask them, and you will get a much different answer. No one in the Puerto Rican community is happy with the way this President has treated the island and its 3 million American citizens. He has treated them with contempt. It needs to stop.

So, President Trump, if you want to help the farmers in the Midwest, be fair to everyone. You can't pick and choose.

Some of them say: Oh, but Puerto Rico isn't spending its aid well. I heard that when we wanted Sandy money for New York. You can say that about any region. In an emergency, no government program will be perfect, but that is not a reason to hold back the money. Instead, send the money and have some oversight, but help the people. They need it. You can't pick and choose which Americans to help.

I would say this to President Trump: As our President, you must represent all Americans, not just the ones who voted for you.

I yield the floor.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Joseph F. Bianco, of New York, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Second Circuit.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

EXPORT-IMPORT BANK

Mr. LEE. Madam President, many Americans might be surprised, shocked, and troubled to learn that some of their tax dollars are going directly to Chinese companies and that some of those dollars even go to corporations owned by the Chinese Government, like Chinese banks, Chinese development agencies, and Chinese microprocessor factories. In recent years, in fact, China received \$50 million in loans and guarantees, all backed by American citizens.

Taxpayers would be right to be puzzled and concerned about why their hard-earned money is subsidizing Chinese state-owned companies. To be clear, we are not talking about voluntary investment from American

businesses; we are talking about the backing of the U.S. Government. They might ask: How is this the case? Why on Earth would we do this? Why is this happening? The answer has to do with the very institution to which we are going to be trying to confirm nominees today.

The Export-Import Bank—or Ex-Im, as it is often described—was created during the height of the Great Depression to help U.S. exporters when they were desperate for customers and foreign markets lacked the capital to finance trade. It was conceived particularly to help small businesses to be able to compete, as many of its current proponents still claim, still insist, to this very day.

But for decades, the institution that is the Export-Import Bank has unfortunately been used as a giant tool for corporate welfare. Ex-Im has operated to benefit the wealthiest and the most politically connected businesses in America, as well as their overseas clients and, believe it or not, foreign governments. Take Boeing, for instance. Look, it is no coincidence that Ex-Im has been nicknamed "Boeing's bank." When Ex-Im financing was at its peak, Boeing received 70 percent of all Export-Import Bank loan guarantees and 40 percent of all Ex-Im dollars.

Which other large corporations have benefited? Well, they include General Electric, John Deere, Caterpillar, and other industrial giants—hardly businesses that are unable to get financing elsewhere; hardly businesses that fit within the category of what the biggest proponents of Ex-Im claim need Ex-Im to exist in the first place.

In fact, while Ex-Im claims that 90 percent of the businesses to which it provides support are "small businesses," when you dive into those numbers, the numbers tell a somewhat different story. They show that small businesses received only about 25 percent of Ex-Im dollars. That doesn't even touch the fact that in 2014 Caterpillar and Boeing were the first and fourth largest recipients of so-called small business funds from Ex-Im. So if Boeing and Caterpillar—great U.S. companies that employ tens of thousands of hard-working Americans and make good products used by people all over the world—if they can be considered small businesses, it makes you question the vernacular used by Export-Import Bank proponents.

Looking at the Bank's track record as a whole, only one-half of 1 percent of all small businesses in America actually benefit from Export-Import financing—a very small tip of a very large iceberg; a very small portion of all business enterprises in the United States. It makes one question, why, then, do we have one entity that is set up to provide such a large benefit to so few businesses?