

No, my Republican colleagues want to put the Russia investigation in the past, and as quickly as possible. And then in the next breath, of course, at the hearing where Attorney General Barr appeared, we see that they want to return to those thrilling days of yesterday. They say we need to look at Hillary Clinton's emails all over again. That, to them, is a more compelling issue. I think they are wrong. The interference by a foreign power in the U.S. election is the most compelling issue before us, and it cannot and should not be ignored.

The work on the Russia investigation is not over. The Mueller report has 14 criminal investigations that have been referred by the special counsel to other Justice Department components. Twelve of those referred investigations are redacted so we don't know their nature.

There is also the counterintelligence side of the investigation. We need to fully understand what evidence Special Counsel Mueller uncovered about how the Russians were able to accomplish what they did.

A spokesman for the White House said several days ago that he couldn't understand all the furor behind this Russia interference. After all, they just bought a couple Facebook ads. Well, it turns out he was wrong. There was a lot more involvement, and the Mueller report pointed to it.

Here is my concern: Attorney General Barr's actions have compromised his credibility when it comes to overseeing the continuing investigations that were brought on by the Mueller inquiry. Barr's blatant mischaracterization of the Mueller report in his March 24 letter and April 18 press conference, his 19-page memo in 2018 that showed bias on the question of obstruction, his decision to make a prosecutorial judgment on obstruction despite Mueller's view that it was not appropriate for the Department to do so in light of that OLC opinion, and Barr's many stunning statements before Congress have undermined confidence in his independence and his judgment.

I have called on him publicly and renew that call that he recuse himself from those pending criminal investigations and prosecutions that emanate from the Mueller report. At a minimum, he should recuse himself from the 14 ongoing referred criminal investigations, and Special Counsel Mueller and Don McGahn should be called on to testify about unresolved questions.

Why in the world are they trying to cover up this investigation? Why wouldn't we bring Bob Mueller before the Senate Judiciary Committee, for example, and ask obvious questions?

Remember, there are two volumes in the Mueller report. The first volume relates to Russian interference in the election and our continuing concern that they are going to try it again in 2020. Shouldn't it be priority one of the Senate Judiciary Committee to have

Bob Mueller before us, to have the evidence he accumulated carefully evaluated to protect the integrity of the election process in 2020? Is there any higher priority in a democracy than the integrity of an election?

Clearly, there is, and we have seen it and heard it from the chairman of the Judiciary Committee as well as from the Republican leader today. The highest priority for them is to move on; make certain that we don't spend any moment contemplating, considering, or even arguing about what we could do to make this a better and safer democracy in the next electoral cycle.

On the issue of obstruction of justice, I am afraid we are going to be debating that for some time, but I certainly would like to hear from Bob Mueller, directly, what he did find and why he did not reach a conclusion to exonerate the President on that charge. That is a critical element.

Let me say one last word about a recurring theme and message from the Republican leader about how the previous President, Barack Obama, did not take seriously the threats of Russian involvement in the 2016 election.

I think the record speaks for itself. Leading up to October 7, when the President came forward and publicly stated what he had been doing—what his administration had been doing to investigate this Russian interference, he called for a bipartisan commitment of Republicans and Democrats to stop it in place.

There was one voice of resistance, and it came from Senator McConnell, the Republican leader. He didn't want to take this as seriously as President Obama did. So for him to blame President Obama for not doing enough is to ignore the obvious. Given the chance, as the Republican Senate leader, he did little or nothing to acknowledge the Russian threat or do anything about it.

Now we should do something to make sure 2020 turns out to be an election we can be proud of, regardless of the outcome. Let the American people have the last word, not Vladimir Putin.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Idaho.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding the provisions of rule XXII, the cloture votes on the Reed, Bachus, and Pryor nominations occur at 4 p.m. on Tuesday, May 7; further, that if cloture is invoked on the nominations on Wednesday, May 8, at 10 a.m., the Senate vote on the confirmations of the following persons and nominations in the order listed: Bianco, Reed, Bachus, and Pryor; that if confirmed, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's actions and the Senate resume consideration of the Dhillon nomination.

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

EXPORT-IMPORT NOMINATIONS

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, I rise to speak in support of several of the nominations to the Export-Import Bank: Ms. Kimberly Reed, to be President of the Export-Import Bank; the Honorable Spencer Bachus, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Export-Import Bank; and Ms. Judith Pryor, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Export-Import Bank.

These three highly qualified nominees, if confirmed, will be in a position to ensure that the Export-Import Bank has the ability to provide finance in response to governments, like China, that provide aggressive subsidies and place U.S. exporters at a disadvantage.

The President and his team have recently reinforced their commitment to restoring the ability of the Bank to support American economic interests in global marketplaces.

The Director of the National Economic Council, Larry Kudlow, recently noted that the Ex-Im Bank is needed in the current trade environment, particularly with respect to China, in order for the United States to compete and succeed in international markets, calling it a "financial tool and a national security weapon."

U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer has called the lack of a functioning Ex-Im Bank a serious blow to the economy.

Peter Navarro, Director of the Office of Trade and Manufacturing Policy, has said: "The costs of keeping the Ex-Im Bank on the sidelines can be measured in the tens of billions of dollars of products we fail to export—and in the thousands of jobs we fail to create when this country does not have a fully functioning export credit agency to compete with its counterparts around the world."

It is clear that in our current trade environment, a fully functioning bank could help the United States better succeed in international markets.

President Trump's recent budget submission to Congress notes that the President "supports a fully functioning Ex-Im Bank to implement reforms and help American exporters compete in an increasingly unfair global marketplace."

As President of the Export-Import Bank, Kimberly Reed will be able to draw from an already distinguished career in public service, having previously served as a senior adviser to former Treasury Secretaries Paulson and Snow, as well as on several congressional committees.

During her nomination hearing, she committed to focusing on strong standards of conduct, increased transparency, sound risk management practices, and eliminating waste, fraud, and abuse.

I can testify that she has gone out of her way to make herself available to all Senators on both sides of the aisle to introduce herself and to answer any questions the Senators have and to discuss any reforms and improvements

she may be able to make to the Bank when she is confirmed.

Former Representative Bachus and I were elected to the House of Representatives in the same term and worked closely together in the House for a number of years. He served the Sixth District of Alabama from 1993 to 2015. During that time, he served as both chairman and ranking member of the House Financial Services Committee. He is a pragmatic conservative and has demonstrated a longstanding commitment to promoting economic opportunity.

Finally, a native of Cleveland, OH, Ms. Pryor has spent the majority of her career in the private sector, working with international businesses, many in the high-tech industry. More recently, she has served as the Vice President of External Affairs at the Overseas Private Investment Corporation under President Obama. During her confirmation hearing, Ms. Pryor expressed a commitment to particularly help raise awareness of the Export-Import Bank's financing products for small businesses and community banks.

While it is not really being included in the coverage of these nomination votes as being one of the consequences of there being a lack of a quorum on the Board, it is important to understand another important reason to confirm not one but all three of these nominees.

When the Export-Import Bank was last reauthorized in 2015, Congress implemented a number of reforms to the Bank. However, by not confirming a quorum of at least three Board members for the last several years, Congress has actually impeded implementation of a number of its own reforms, which require a vote of a quorum of the Board for approval.

These reforms include appointing a chief ethics officer, appointing a chief risk officer, forming a risk management committee, implementing new guidelines to expedite small business loans under \$25 million, and developing an expanded medium-term program to finance and ensure transactions up to \$25 million.

We have many colleagues who have said there need to be reforms implemented in order for them to further support operation of the Bank, and they would like to work with us on the Banking Committee to pursue those reforms. I support reforms, too, and look forward to working with interested colleagues, but we need to understand that we will need a quorum on the Ex-Im Bank to finalize them.

For any previous or future congressionally directed reforms to be implemented, Senators need to support all three nominations before the Senate this week in order to restore the quorum necessary to implement those reforms.

The Banking Committee approved each of these nominees with broad bipartisan support earlier this year. Each

will be an asset to the Bank's Board, and I urge my colleagues to support these nominations.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:30 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mrs. CAPITO).

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

NOMINATION OF KIMBERLY A. REED

Mr. MANCHIN. Madam President, I am very honored to offer my support today for Kimberly Reed to be President of the Export-Import Bank of the United States. I think the Presiding Officer is very proud, too. We are both proud that the first woman to lead the Ex-Im Bank will also be the first West Virginian.

As a former West Virginia small business owner, I know this is an engine for economic growth and long-term stability and prosperity. It is truly beneficial for those businesses to reach broader markets and new customers. Rural states like West Virginia have a lot of talent and a lot of great businesses, but we need to make sure these companies are hitting global markets and building in sales and supporting more jobs here at home.

The Ex-Im Bank creates jobs and helps businesses, both big and small, to sell their products overseas at no cost—I repeat, at no cost—to the Federal Government, in addition to providing loans and other forms of credit. The Bank can also help with market research and to identify potential buyers and distributors of products in foreign countries. It is like having your own reconnaissance team, PR team, and a sales force, everything wrapped up into one.

In 2014, I invited the former Ex-Im Bank Chairman, Fred Hochberg, to West Virginia. Since then the Bank has worked with 14 West Virginia businesses throughout the State, providing \$11 million in loans to support \$18 million in exports. The people in West Virginia had no idea of the opportunities that a small business person would have with the Ex-Im Bank. They had no idea how to get into foreign markets. They didn't have any idea about the collections process or the legal expertise in that arena. This helped them immensely.

I know Kimberly wants to do the same thing for our State and for small businesses across rural America.

I can state that Kim's West Virginia roots shaped her to be the leader she is today. Growing up in Buckhannon, WV, and graduating from West Virginia Wesleyan College and West Virginia University, Kim checks all of the boxes

for the best and brightest our State can offer. Every West Virginian will know what it means when I say that she was a Golden Horseshoe awardee and a Governor's Honors Academy graduate.

She hasn't lost sight of those roots, either. She continues to serve on the Wesleyan board of trustees and has worked with West Virginians every step of her career, whether it was as the senior adviser to the Secretary of the Treasury or the head of the Community Development Financial Institutions Fund.

Kim exemplifies bedrock Appalachian values, and her deep commitment to serving her Nation through the House of Representatives and the Department of Treasury is a true testament to her character. I have always been proud to call her a West Virginian, and I know that I and the Presiding Officer will be proud to call her the President and Chairwoman of the Ex-Im Bank.

I urge my colleagues to support Kimberly Reed to lead the Export-Import Bank of the United States.

Thank you, Madam President.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

ECONOMIC GROWTH

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, the performance of the U.S. economy is something to behold. It doesn't matter if you measure it by the unemployment rate, by the quarterly growth rates, or by wages, virtually every sign points to a growing thriving economy.

Let me emphasize some of the outstanding job numbers that came out just last week. In April, there were 263,000 new jobs created—263,000—beating even the most optimistic estimates. The unemployment rate fell to 3.6 percent—the lowest unemployment rate in nearly half a century.

The first quarter saw a 3.2 percent growth, the best in 4 years. The truth is, the United States' economy has taken off like a rocket.

Today we find ourselves in what some economists refer to as a "full employment" economy, because there are more job openings than there are job seekers. That is a remarkable place to be, and I have no doubt that it is in significant part due to the pro-growth policies created by a Republican-led Congress and the Trump administration the last 2 years.

Less than 1½ years ago we passed the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. We tried to make this a bipartisan effort, but our Democratic friends wanted no part of it. This was the first major tax overhaul in a generation. This legislation removed many of the burdens from families, entrepreneurs, and job creators and let the free market take the wheel.

A lot of pundits and a lot of the naysayers—the professional cynics—said it wouldn't work, but I think the results speak for themselves. Workers