

another strong, bipartisan vote of confidence in this exceptionally well-qualified jurist.

Finally, the Senate will consider Janet Dhillon, of Pennsylvania, to serve on the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, and it will consider Michael Park, of New York, to be a U.S. circuit judge for the Second Circuit. I am proud that even amid partisan distractions, this body will continue fulfilling one of its key constitutional responsibilities.

ECONOMIC GROWTH

Madam President, on one final matter, I talked about leaving the “outrage industrial complex” behind and returning focus to the issues that impact the everyday lives of the American people. That is what my Republican colleagues and I have been focused on all along, and we are continuing to see that focus pay off.

For the better part of the last 2 years, the Labor Department’s monthly jobs report has regularly pointed to an economy that has been opening new doors for millions of Americans. It has reinforced what we have known to be the case—that the pro-growth, pro-opportunity agenda enacted by the Republicans has been helping America’s working families, job creators, and entrepreneurs write a remarkable new chapter of prosperity.

Here are just a few of the headlines to emerge following last Friday’s jobs report: “Real gains in the paychecks of average workers”; “Torrent of job offers, bigger salaries offer more proof U.S. labor market is still red-hot”; “U.S. unemployment fell to 3.6 percent, the lowest since December 1969.”

Yet there appears to be plenty of disbelief among Washington Democrats that things like rising wages, consumer confidence, and fierce competition for skilled American workers are causes for celebration. At least, that is what their recent policy proposals have left us to assume.

From a massive Federal experiment in one-size-fits-all health insurance to a Washington-dictated “green” overhaul of American homes, cars, and jobs, the Democrats seem determined to make the current wave of prosperity and economic opportunity short-lived. They are peddling a wholesale shift away from the free enterprise tradition that has unleashed prosperity and opportunity throughout American history, and they are doing so at the very time that daily headlines confirm those principles are still working to literally lift up American families.

In my home State of Kentucky, the unemployment rate has reached its lowest level on record. Communities across the country are tapping into new opportunities for growth, and families and job creators nationwide are benefiting.

So Republicans will continue working hard, laying the groundwork for American free enterprise to seize on this truly extraordinary moment.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that I give my remarks under leader time and that the vote occurs immediately after.

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

REMEMBERING ROBERT PEAR

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I begin this morning with a heavy heart, having heard of the abrupt passing of New York Times journalist Robert Pear.

It just so happens that Robert lived on my floor in college during freshman year. While everyone else in those days had long hair and wore bell-bottoms, Robert had a flattop, was always studious, inquisitive, polite, and very decent, earning him the nickname “The Deacon.” He was the first to go into the library and the last to come out late at night. The Deacon was different from most of us but earned all of our respect.

Robert maintained the qualities of studiousness and inquisitiveness, politeness and decency throughout his personal and professional life. In my view, he represented the very best of America.

When Robert’s byline appeared on a story—and so often, his stories were on the front page, above the fold of the New York Times—the reader knew the reporting would be both important and authoritative.

His death is a loss for journalism itself. I send my condolences to his family in this moment of profound grief.

MUELLER REPORT

We all know that Leader McConnell would like to move on from the Mueller report. We know that he and many Senate Republicans are ready to say “case closed.” We all know that whether he has been bamboozled by, afraid of, worried about, or simply enamored with President Trump, Leader McConnell would prefer to sweep the entire report under the rug. So, yesterday, Leader McConnell’s speech here on the Senate floor struck me as an impassioned bit of wishful thinking that I believe the leader will regret in later days that he gave.

I am sure President Nixon wished that the investigations into Watergate would simply go away, just as I am sure President Trump wants Mueller’s investigations to fade into the background, but in the first case—President

Nixon—we had courageous Republicans who put the rule of law above simple fealty to a President, and they resisted. Unfortunately, thus far, Leader McConnell has shown none of that nobility and strength. He is simply going along with President Trump.

Just for a moment, though, let us set aside the discussion about the President’s repeated attempts to obstruct the Federal investigation. Let’s just talk about the conclusions Mueller came to about election interference in 2016, separate from his views of the investigation of Trump.

Does Leader McConnell agree that election security is a serious and ongoing challenge? Does Leader McConnell agree with FBI Director Wray that “2018 was a dress rehearsal” for foreign influence campaigns against the United States? Does the leader agree with our intelligence and law enforcement officials who are warning us right now that foreign capitals—Russia above all but perhaps Iran and China and Turkey—are gearing up to try to interfere with our elections in 2020?

This is the wellspring of our democracy. Russia may temporarily want to choose one candidate over another—as they chose Trump in 2016 and may well again—but their ultimate goal is to sow such dissension, worry, and lack of faith in our democracy that it could crumble. If everyone believes that foreigners are influencing our elections and the outcome isn’t just, that is a terrible—terrible—step downward for America that none of us wants to take.

Then why doesn’t Leader McConnell at least do something about election security, independent of President Trump—although, those investigations and hearings should go on and will. If so, if Leader McConnell believes this foreign interference in our elections is a serious problem, then he has an obligation to separate himself from his desire to shield the President from accountability and to act on this national imperative to defend our democracy from insidious and foreign attack.

Whatever Leader McConnell believes about the President’s behavior and for whatever reason, there is no reason for Leader McConnell to resist bipartisan bills like the Secure Elections Act that would harden election infrastructure. There is no reason for Leader McConnell to oppose additional funding in the appropriations process for States to safeguard their election hardware. For God’s sake, there is no good reason for Leader McConnell to resist or delay scheduling an all-Senators briefing on election threats in 2020. The only reason to do that would be false.

I hope the reason Leader McConnell is resisting strengthening and securing our elections is not because he believes Russia will help President Trump and that he is willing to let that go forward. I hope that is not true. There is no good reason on God’s green Earth why we shouldn’t be making our elections more secure, even though we may

have different views about the Mueller report.

I urge my friend the Republican leader: Disentangle yourself from the self-serving desire to sweep the Mueller report and all of its findings under the rug. Recognize that it is indisputable that Russian interference is a great threat to our elections, that the Mueller report helped corroborate and document that, and work with us. For the sake of America, Leader MCCONNELL, work with us to protect our country from foreign interference in our elections in the future. Do not—you cannot; you must not—sit on the sidelines.

DISASTER RELIEF

Madam President, on another issue, yesterday we heard Leader MCCONNELL say he would like to get a disaster relief package done by Memorial Day. Democrats in this Chamber are going to hold him to that standard, and we will make sure the package provided will have funding for all affected communities, from Hawaii all the way to Puerto Rico.

My colleagues from the Midwest and South are starting to feel the heat. According to press reports, they are going to Leader MCCONNELL and saying, “We have to get something done,” because they realize, justifiably, that with each passing week, the cost of inaction grows. Cities in Iowa have endured another round of flooding. In the South, the hurricane season is around the corner. We need to get disaster aid out the door.

When you want to know why it hasn’t happened, first and foremost, it is because President Trump disrupted a bipartisan bill that would have passed a month and a half ago and said: No aid for Puerto Rico. Second, our Republican colleagues in the Midwest and in the South willingly went along with that, thinking they could roll over Puerto Rico, roll over the House, and roll over Democrats in the Senate.

Well, now you have learned that is not happening. So work with us on a bipartisan package. We want to get it done. We want to see aid go to every part of the country, including the Midwest, including the South, including Florida, and including Texas, but Puerto Rico must be treated similarly and fairly.

I promise that we could solve this impasse in a moment. If Republicans in the Senate agree to treat Puerto Rico fairly, a disaster package will pass this Chamber like a hot knife through butter.

Our position is very simple: Democrats support a package for disaster relief that provides support for all affected Americans: Hawaii, California, Iowa, the South, the Atlantic coast, the Pacific islands, and the island of Puerto Rico, and we are not going to move forward unless everyone is included and everyone is treated fairly.

NOMINATIONS

Madam President, on nominations, today is a great example of how Leader

MCCONNELL and the Senate, in place of real legislative progress and in place of helping the middle class in this turbulent world in which we live, simply used floor time as a legislative graveyard to only rubberstamp extreme and unqualified nominees with no legislating. We have become a legislative graveyard under Leader MCCONNELL’s leadership, and the middle class and people trying to get there suffer.

This afternoon, Senate Republicans are going to confirm Janet Dhillon to be the Chair of the EEOC. This move to restore a quorum by confirming a Republican nominee, while refusing to consider Democratic nominees—which had been the Senate’s tradition to always do these nominees in a bipartisan way, one Democrat and one Republican together—is going to imperil equal pay rules and protections for LGBTQ workers.

This afternoon, the Senate will vote to end debate on the nomination of Michael Park to the Second Circuit. A quick overview of Mr. Park’s experience reveals some pretty outlandish views.

In private practice, he advanced arguments that would limit the civil rights of millions of Americans on matters pertaining to the census and educational opportunity. He represented groups in an amicus brief against the constitutionality of Medicaid expansion and worked to defend the Kansas effort to defund Planned Parenthood.

Since the Second Circuit covers my home State of New York, I met with Mr. Park to try to understand why he was being nominated for a lifetime position as a circuit court judge. Frankly, his principal qualifications seemed to be that he is a card-carrying member of the Federalist Society.

Mr. Park has little experience and little judicial background. He is an ideologue. He doesn’t have the kind of balance and integrity and compassion and understanding of both sides that any judge needs. It will be obvious to anyone who reviews his record that he lacks the breadth and objectivity that we prize in our judges, but my Republican friends, like Leader MCCONNELL, have a singular goal: to remake the Federal bench in their image. So Federalist stooges, like Mr. Park, who aren’t qualified for District Court, are being rammed through as circuit court judges.

The Senate ought to reject this confirmation. In the less partisan Senates of the past, it wouldn’t even have come forward, but, regrettably, instead of legislating, instead of doing things for the American people, all Leader MCCONNELL is doing is ramming through these nominees, most of whom are way out of the mainstream, far away from the views of most Americans, and unqualified for their jobs.

This wouldn’t have happened years ago. I hope my colleagues, when they look at Mr. Park’s record, will do the right thing.

WOMEN’S HEALTHCARE

Madam President, finally, on women’s healthcare, later today, a group of Democratic Senators will come to the floor to highlight what has been a campaign—a campaign—by Republicans to strip women of the right to make their own healthcare decisions.

At the Federal level, the latest salvo in their offensive is the title X gag rule, which would hurt low-income individuals’ access to reproductive health. In my view, this is a disgusting attempt to restrict women’s freedom. The effects of the policy are real and threaten the lives of women across America.

Take Natarsha, one of my constituents in New York. She was 33 years old when she found two lumps in her left breast. She went to see the gynecologist at Planned Parenthood. Natarsha was diagnosed with breast cancer and underwent treatment. Now, praise God, more than 5 years later, her cancer is in complete remission. If not for the exams and other prevention offered by Planned Parenthood clinics across the country, Natarsha and other women like her might never have received lifesaving diagnoses, but Republicans, time and again, have pushed to defund Planned Parenthood and threatened access to the essential care it provides.

Republican-led State legislatures across the country, emboldened by President Trump, have continued their attack on the reproductive rights of women. Just last month, both South Carolina and Ohio passed bills banning abortion after only 6 weeks of pregnancy, when many women may not even know they are pregnant. Just yesterday, Georgia’s Governor signed his State’s version of that bill into law.

Since taking office, President Trump and his Republican colleagues have prioritized—prioritized—restricting women’s reproductive freedoms. They believe they know better, and they impose their views on American women. That is just wrong.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CRAMER). The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent for 3 minutes to address the Senate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

EXPORT-IMPORT BANK NOMINATIONS

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, the Senate is finally holding long overdue votes on nominees to the Export-Import Bank of the United States. To me, this is about Ohio businesses; this is about American workers; and this is about the dignity of work. All three of these nominees are qualified.

For nearly 4 years, the Export-Import Bank has been forced to stop most of the work supporting American jobs. A small group of opponents, supported by special interests in this town, tried to kill this bank altogether. Ex-Im has been paralyzed because of leadership in