

particular threat and work together to keep America safe.

I also want to mention the American diplomats who are also hard at work overseas. We know that many of them, too, are stationed in harm's way, as we remember from repeated Iranian-backed attacks over many years on our Embassy in Baghdad or the murder of Ambassador Chris Stevens in Benghazi.

We are grateful for the talent and the hard work they have deployed—often, hand in hand with our military—to advance American interests, preserve peace, prevent miscalculation, and deter conflict. I know I speak for all of my colleagues when I say I hope their efforts are heeded.

SENATE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, on a different matter, as I stated, the Senate will not adjourn this week until we have voted on legislation to deliver long, overdue relief funding for communities that have been hit hard by natural disasters.

None of my colleagues need to hear me recite yet again why action in this area is such an important priority and why it is so urgently needed. It is a shame that this overdue subject has been allowed to languish for so long due to extraneous questions and, frankly, partisan small-ball.

Wildfire victims in the Western States don't want to hear about House Democrats' various disagreements with the White House on a variety of issues. They simply want the relief they need and have been waiting for.

The same goes for the flooded Midwest, the hurricane-ravaged Southeast, and the Kentuckians I myself represent. They don't want to hear about more Washington difficulties. They want an outcome.

And, of course, everyone is well aware that we have an ongoing humanitarian crisis on our southern border and that our Federal Government needs more resources to deal with it. Even the New York Times editorial board wrote a few weeks ago:

As resources are strained and the system buckles, the misery grows. Something needs to be done. Soon.

That is the New York Times.

The editorial went on:

[T]he program that deals with unaccompanied minors is expected to run dry next month. . . . Democrats need to find a way to provide money for adequate shelter.

That is the New York Times.

And here was the title of the editorial, believe it or not: "Congress, Give Trump His Border Money." That is in the New York Times.

So on all these matters, it is past time—way past time to bring these negotiations to a close.

I thank Chairman SHELBY and all of our colleagues whose leadership has brought a bipartisan and bicameral solution this close to the finish line—this close. I implore our counterparts in the House and my colleagues in this Cham-

ber to quickly resolve the last few issues and produce compromise legislation today. We need to do this today because, one way or another, the Senate is not leaving without taking action. We are going to vote this week, and I sincerely hope we will be voting on a bicameral and bipartisan, negotiated solution that could become law for the American people.

TOBACCO-FREE YOUTH ACT

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, earlier this week, Senator Kaine and I introduced new legislation to raise the national minimum age for purchasing tobacco products to 21. Now, it has generated some attention that Senators from Kentucky and Virginia—States with some connection to tobacco farming and production—are sponsoring this legislation, but, as I said Monday, Kentucky farmers don't want their children forming nicotine addictions in middle school or high school any more than anyone else.

Well, it turns out a lot of people across the country feel the same way we do. We have already seen more than a dozen experts, advocates, and public health groups come to rally around our legislation. One such organization said that the proposal would "support smoking prevention among a population that is particularly susceptible to addiction, whose brains are still developing, and among whom nicotine use can have long-term developmental harms."

When you consider the design of our approach, it is hardly surprising that leading voices in this area are lining up with enthusiasm. It is practical, it is within our reach, and it can become law. Our legislation simply works from the foundation of existing law. We take the existing mechanisms that are in Federal statute today to enforce the 18-year minimum standard and replace "18" with "21." It is simple, it is straightforward, and it builds on what we know works.

Not only does this approach streamline implementation for addressing a widely acknowledged public health crisis, but it also preserves the freedom of individual States to go even further in their efforts to protect vulnerable youth. Yet it ensures States cannot enact anything less protective than the Federal T21 standard.

As I said earlier in the week, all youth below the age of 21 deserve the same protections from the public health crisis of nicotine addiction. Anyone who actually reads our bill will see that our intentions are clear and above reproach. Partisan griping will not save lives, nor will it prevent even more middle schoolers from yielding to potentially deadly addiction. As one advocate put it, "Every extra day it takes to put this important legislation into effect is an opportunity for thousands more kids to access a tobacco product that can damage their developing brains."

Now is the time for us to join together in a bipartisan manner and actually get a result that our Nation's youth so obviously need. In just 3 days since introduction, I have been encouraged by the support the Tobacco-Free Youth Act has received. I look forward to working with each of our colleagues to make it a reality and fight back against the scourge of addiction among America's young people.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The 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 (Mrs. HYDE-SMITH). Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

DISASTER RELIEF

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, there is a lot of partisan squabbling that goes on around here. We all know that. Some of it is to be expected. After all, our parties have real disagreements about policy and the direction in which we think the country should go.

But there are a few issues that are too important to get caught up in the typical partisan back-and-forth—a few fundamental responsibilities that we must fulfill as a governing body.

One of those responsibilities where there has always been bipartisan agreement has been disaster relief. Hurricanes, fires, and floods don't hit only Republicans or only Democrats. They hit Americans of all stripes. We must come together to provide relief for everybody.

After holding up disaster relief on behalf of the President, who demanded we shortchange Puerto Rico, Republicans finally came around a few weeks ago and agreed with a disaster relief bill that would provide relief to everyone.

Let me repeat. We have an agreement right now on where and how to provide relief for Americans in the Midwest, in the South, in the West, and in the Territories. Chairman SHELBY and Vice Chairman LEAHY have worked in good faith to reach that compromise. The House will accept it. Chairman LOWEY and Ranking Member GRANGER also have agreed to this disaster relief package. So there is a package of disaster relief that is ready to go.

Unfortunately, that agreement has become entangled with extraneous issues. However important these other issues may be, we have an obligation to get this disaster relief package over the finish line before the congressional Memorial Day work period.

Ranking Member LEAHY and I would like to make it clear to my friend the

Republican leader that Senate Democrats are ready to pass the bipartisan disaster relief package that has already been agreed to and written.

We should leave out extraneous issues. There are many. Everyone wants to put in their own thing. Leave them for another day.

Democrats are willing to work hard to expedite consideration of that agreement. We are ready to work with our Republican colleagues to pass it as quickly as possible.

I understand that there is some discussion going on in the House, but if we can't come to an agreement this morning on the extraneous issues that the House is discussing, we should set those issues to the side. We should pass the disaster agreement as is and return to those unrelated issues at a later date. The people of the Midwest, of the South, of the West, and of the Territories have waited long enough. They have waited long enough.

There are millions of Americans still recovering from having their homes destroyed, their crops devastated, their property burnt. They have waited for relief for too long already. They are clamoring for it. They have said to Congress: Put aside your differences and get something done. The plan that I outlined will do just that—put aside the differences and get something done.

Whether it is the President or Members of the House or Senate—Democrat or Republican—who want to add extraneous issues, step aside at least for this time. Let's get it done. Let's not delay any longer.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, on infrastructure, yesterday, as everyone knows, Speaker PELOSI and I met with the President and a group of other Senators and Congress Members to discuss the prospects for a bipartisan infrastructure bill.

We went to the meeting with high hopes. The President, 3 weeks earlier, had said he would be willing to do a \$2 trillion infrastructure bill and tell us how we would pay for it. Unfortunately, it was a very short meeting. The President walked out after a few minutes with the paltry excuse that he would not work to get things done for Americans unless Congress abdicated its constitutional duty to provide oversight of the executive branch.

His motives were transparent. He knows darn well that these investigations should and will go forward. He had nothing to say on infrastructure. It was typical of the President. He boasts that he wants to do something and then has no followthrough. This administration has become an erratic, helter-skelter, get-nothing-done administration. Even on infrastructure, where there is usually bipartisan agreement, he couldn't even come to the table and talk. He had to throw a temper tantrum and walk out.

Presidents throughout our history have worked with the other party

while being investigated. They know—every President knows—it is a fact that Congress will do oversight. Some of it will not be pleasant for any President. President Obama didn't like oversight; President Bush didn't like oversight; President Clinton didn't like oversight; President H.W. Bush didn't like oversight; President Reagan didn't like oversight. But none of them, Democrat or Republican, said: I am going to stop the government from functioning. I am going to refuse to help hundreds of millions of Americans who need help in one way or another because I don't like Congress fulfilling its constitutional responsibility.

The bottom line is simple. The President was merely looking for any excuse, however inelegant, however transparent, to wriggle out of working with Democrats on a much needed infrastructure bill.

Nothing about yesterday's meeting at the White House changes the fact that we have serious infrastructure demands in our country. Nothing about yesterday's meeting changes the fact that a substantial investment in infrastructure can boost our economy, put millions of Americans to work, create green jobs and green energy sources, and meet the ever-growing demands of the new 21st century.

We came to the meeting with the President with serious intentions to work with him on a large bipartisan bill. He had asked the night before in his letter where we wanted to put the money. I brought to him a 35-page proposal with ideas on how to craft one. We talked about what needs to be done: repairing and rebuilding our old roads and bridges, water and sewer, building a power grid so that we can bring clean energy from the parts of the country blessed with wind and sun to other parts of the country in need of energy, dealing with infrastructure in a way that creates broadband for all of the rural and inner city homes that don't have it, creating green jobs, encouraging electric and other kinds of vehicles that will reduce the output of carbon into the air, and creating much more energy-efficient homes and schools.

There are many demands. It was a comprehensive proposal. The President might not agree with all of it, but we were there, prepared to roll up our sleeves, work, and come up with a plan.

Unfortunately, the President had no plan. Despite his promise 3 weeks earlier that he would have a plan, he had none. Two nights before, he had said: Well, let's not discuss infrastructure until we discuss USMCA and NAFTA. Then, that morning, he didn't even take a seat. He stood up, obviously agitated, and said that the investigations were wrong and stalked out.

We left the meeting disappointed in both the President's decision and demeanor. But America can be assured that Democrats will try to find ways to move the ball forward on this important issue of roads, bridges, broadband,

and power—with or without the President.

Democrats believe in infrastructure, plain and simple. We believe that our infrastructure is an urgent priority of the country and this Congress. We believe we need to rebuild existing infrastructure—the roads, bridges, ports, and sewers. We need to build the infrastructure of tomorrow, such as wind, solar, a new power grid, and broadband for rural and inner city America.

We believe our next investment in infrastructure must be substantial. We believe we can pay for it without asking the middle class to shoulder the burden.

We believe a new 21st century infrastructure program is one of the very best ways to create millions of long-term, good-paying jobs, to boost our economy, and to help combat climate change.

So I say to my Republican colleagues in the Senate: Despite the President's unwillingness to work on anything that benefits the American people, according to him, let's move forward on an infrastructure bill. Let's put together a large, strong, well-funded, and clean infrastructure bill.

Members of both sides should want the opportunity to work on something that will benefit every constituency in every State in America. Members should want to tell the American people that they are working to bring jobs to their States, broadband to rural and underserved urban communities, to work together to improve the economy and the environment with a clean, green infrastructure bill. There is no reason why the Senate should not pursue a bipartisan infrastructure bill.

Congress has taken the lead before. Congress can take the lead again, no matter what the President does. Just because President Trump doesn't want to lead doesn't mean that our work on infrastructure is over—not by a long shot.

I yield the floor.

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

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

HEALTHCARE

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, if you have a leak in your sink or a dripping pipe in the bathroom, you generally fix it yourself or call a plumber to fix the problem. You don't look at your otherwise functioning house and decide to raze it to the ground because of the plumbing issue. But that is basically what Democrats want to do with our healthcare system.

Our healthcare system certainly isn't perfect, but our system also has plenty of positive things going for it: high-