

bill passes the House of Representatives. None of them come before the Senate for a vote—no healthcare bills, no immigration bills, no anti-gun violence bills.

I get it that the bills that pass the House probably can't pass a Republican-led Senate, but why are we not even trying? Who is in charge here? The special interests who want nothing to happen, the gun lobby, the health insurance companies or are we in charge? We are the ones who were elected. We are the Members of the U.S. Senate. We could choose to have these debates, hash out our differences, and see if there is a proposal that 60 of us could agree on that would do something about this unacceptable level of gun violence that plagues this Nation on a daily basis.

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. SCHUMER. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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.

TARIFFS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, yesterday on the floor I said I don't believe President Trump will follow through on his threat to impose tariffs on Mexico. Why? First, because the President has a tendency for bluster. There are many examples of the President taking a maximalist position before eventually backing off and announcing some different solution. Nine times out of ten, after a few months, everyone realizes that the so-called solution isn't real and doesn't work, but the President needs a way out of his bluster. That may well be true with the tariff issue.

Second, most Senate Republicans oppose the President's idea of slapping tariffs on Mexico. They know how that could destabilize our economy and Mexico's and that it could actually make the migration problem worse.

Publicly, the President has continued the tough talk on tariffs with Mexico—he responded to my statement on the floor with a tweet last night—but ultimately I continue to believe he will back off. That has been his MO. When he does, I would urge him to consider a real solution to the border problem, not some fake solution that he and the Mexicans announce, and then it does nothing—they don't follow through, it doesn't have effect, whatever.

Here is a commonsense policy that will actually reduce the problems at the border: Many of the migrants that

arrive at our southern border are fleeing untenable situations—gang violence, drug cartels, corruption, domestic abuse, economic depravity. If you are starving, if you are worried that your child will be mugged, if you are worried that your daughter will be raped, you ain't staying there. The governments of those countries have failed to provide safety or security for people living within their borders in Nicaragua, in Honduras, and in El Salvador. Their citizens—or some of them—feel compelled to embark on a dangerous 1,000-mile journey on foot rather than stay put because staying put is even worse for them.

These are not evil people. The President would like to make them all out to be drug dealers or criminals. Most of them are poor people who are trying to escape the dangers created by the problems of gang violence, economic hardship, social oligarchy.

We Democrats have crafted legislation that would help address the problems in those three Central American countries that are causing the migrants to flee in the first place.

First, we would allow asylum seekers to apply for asylum within their own countries. That thousand-mile trek across Mexico is dangerous. It is often expensive. You have to pay a coyote or buy off drug dealers or other criminals. Let them apply in Honduras, in El Salvador, in Guatemala and not amass at the border. Second, we provide significant security assistance to Central American countries to build their capacity, crack down on the gangs and drug cartels and human trafficking that is endemic in those countries, and we would increase the number of immigration judges and personnel to reduce the current backlog of cases at the border.

These policies make eminent sense, and unlike the President's plan to impose tariffs on Mexico, our proposals do not threaten the U.S. economy. We would urge our Republican colleagues to join us in this commonsense solution.

When the President inevitably retreats from his tariff threat—which may be as soon as this afternoon—we should proceed on these commonsense policies, not some fake thing that sounds good in an announcement and then goes away like we have seen over and over again when the President conducts foreign policy—North Korea being one of the most notorious examples.

Over the past year, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, despite some positive domestic reforms, has too often acted like a brute in the Middle East rather than a stabilizing force.

I understand that Saudi Arabia worries about Iran. I share those concerns about the Iranian Government, but the Saudis have all too often reacted in the wrong way. In Yemen, the Saudis are fighting a proxy war that has resulted in untold human suffering and the slaughter of innocents of many chil-

dren. Internally, the Saudi Government has conducted a widespread campaign of political repression, including the imprisonment of women's rights campaigners. We all know how the Saudis were responsible for the vicious torture and chilling murder of a journalist and American resident Jamal Khashoggi.

Despite these gross violations of international norms and values, the Trump administration has just cozied up with Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman and offered almost no criticism.

We have just learned, according to reports, that the Trump administration approved seven transfers of American nuclear technology to the Saudis, including two after Khashoggi's murder. Now the administration is using its favorite tool, claiming emergency powers to justify another 22 arms sales to the Saudis and others, including precision-guided munitions for Saudi's operations in Yemen.

Has the Trump administration lost all perspective when it comes to Saudi Arabia—providing excuses and cover for the brutal murder of a journalist and American resident, aiding and arming the Saudis in a human rights tragedy in Yemen, which will only come back to hurt him in the long run. What are we doing here?

Congress has already voted, in bipartisan majorities, to unwind America's involvement in Yemen, which, of course, the President vetoed, and now we ought to vote to disapprove these arms sales.

The chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Foreign Operations, Senator GRAHAM, urged by our ranking member of Foreign Relations and our leader on this issue, Senator MENENDEZ, has thankfully announced the bipartisan effort to do just that. I strongly support that effort.

Let me say, my Republican friends, over the last years of the Obama administration, bitterly complained about the way President Obama used Executive authority. The amount of Executive authority used by President Obama could fit in a thimble compared to the abuse of Executive authority by President Trump. Yet it seems, in the past, our Republican colleagues who so criticized Obama for much less have been totally silent when President Trump abuses Executive authority, but now maybe there are some green shoots.

Maybe some of our Republican colleagues in the Senate are waking up to the idea that in America we have a three-branch government, not a one-branch government, and maybe some of our Republican colleagues are recognizing that and beginning to act—the possible green shoots. Two instances; one is tariffs. Our Republicans don't like these tariffs. Will they have the guts, if the President implements them, to oppose the President? We will see.

Now, on Saudi arms sales, a number of Senate Republicans are beginning to

say we need to constrain the President the way the Congress has traditionally constrained the executive branch. I am hopeful, but I am also skeptical.

If the past is prologue, my Republican friends will ultimately back down. Leader McCONNELL, his MO, will let a few of them off the hook so they can go home and say they supported it but never enough to make sure Congress provides an effective check on the President. It is sort of a wink and a nod. Well, let's hope this time it is different. Let's hope that these murmurings among Republicans about the Saudi arms sales and about the tariffs are real, and they will actually stand up to him, which is what a Congress should do even when they are of the same party as the President.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, on the climate, as I have said so many times, no threat poses a greater danger to our planet than that of climate change. The last 5 years have been the warmest on record. There is more carbon dioxide in the air than any point in human history. Our children and grandchildren will live with the consequences of the decisions we make today. We need all hands on deck—the Federal Government, local governments, municipalities, corporate leaders, global efforts—if we are to meet the challenges of climate change head-on, but for years our government has been too slow to act and more often than not we have done nothing or very little.

Just yesterday, President Trump once again—not based on fact, based on whim, as he so often acts—voiced a dangerous skepticism about climate change while meeting with Prince Charles.

Now, one of the biggest reasons for the slow progress on climate policy has been the oppressive grip of Big Oil, Big Gas, and Big Coal, on our political system. They spent untold millions to debunk climate science and torpedo climate legislation. One of the largest perpetrators has been the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, which never reveals its donors and has acted all too often as a front for Big Oil.

Recently, as public support for action upon climate change has grown even more overwhelming, the chamber is starting to sing a different tune. They have launched a campaign for cleaner energy sources. They have added a new section to their website, “Addressing Climate Change.” They now even say that, on this issue, “inaction is not an option.” Well, I could not agree more; inaction is not an option, but color me skeptical about the chamber.

I hope to see the chamber follow its public stance with real action, but until I do, I fear this change is merely cosmetic. All too often, the big oil and big coal companies don’t act themselves, although some do, but they let the chamber do their dirty work for them. So today SHELDON WHITEHOUSE

and I, along with a number of our colleagues, will be sending a letter to the chamber, calling on them to speak out against the administration’s effort to undermine the “National Climate Assessment.” It is not enough to simply say: Oh, well, it is a problem.

Inaction is not an option. They must do something concrete. This is a concrete action we are proposing that will make a difference. I read in today’s New York Times that companies are now beginning to plan for how climate change will cost them more money in the next 5 years. They don’t think it is no problem. They don’t think it is a 30-year problem. These companies and their interest in their profits—that is how they should be interested, although I would like to see them a little more interested in workers and communities and climate. These companies, for their own bottom lines, are saying climate change is real, and we better do something.

Well, one way the chamber can move things along is to speak out against this administration in its efforts to undermine the “National Climate Assessment.” For years, this study has been the gold standard for climate research within our government. It is not partisan. It is factual; it is based on science; and it assesses the long-term threats to climate change.

The President is sort of, on climate, a member of the Flat Earth Society, just denying the facts. It would be as if Columbus sailed, and the President still said the earth is flat. That is how he is acting on climate. Well, the Chamber ought to break with that. They ought to let science and facts determine how we act.

This is a moment when the Chamber could actually use its influence to convince the administration to reverse course. If the business community said this, it would make a big difference. So this is a moment. Let’s see if the chamber really wants to prove that they are for climate change. Let’s see. Let’s see. If they don’t, we ask their members who say they believe in climate—and who are even planning for the problems we face—to put pressure on them to do it. Let’s hope. Let’s hope.

Now, before I yield the floor, I just want to send a kudos—he reminded me that the word “kudos” is singular, not plural, which I did not know for all of my years here. Mr. President, I see by your reaction, you did not know either. It is a kudos. So let me give a kudos to SHELDON WHITEHOUSE’s leadership on this issue. One of his many positive traits is he knows grammar and all of that much better than most of us, but one of his greater traits is how he has been relentless in pushing forward on climate and on pushing corporate America to do more.

I look forward to continuing to work with him to shed light on the role that Big Money plays in undermining climate policy, and I look forward to hearing from the chamber of commerce on what they have to say about the ad-

ministration’s latest attacks on climate science.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

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 David Schenker, of New Jersey, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (Near Eastern Affairs).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to complete my remarks.

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

(The remarks of Mrs. BLACKBURN pertaining to the introduction of S. Res. 233 are printed in today’s RECORD under “Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.”)

Mrs. BLACKBURN. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SASSE). The Senator from Arkansas.

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the votes following the first vote in the series be 10 minutes in length—I say again, 10 minutes in length.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

VOTE ON SCHENKER NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Schenker nomination?

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER) and the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER) would have voted “yea” and the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN) would have voted “yea.”

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Illinois (Ms. DUCKWORTH),