

Russians or any other foreign power didn't interfere. Does Leader McCONNELL object to auditing our elections to make sure the outcomes are accurate? Are election audits partisan?

Making sure the States and localities have adequate resources to update and maintain election infrastructure—does Leader McCONNELL oppose that, when 21 attorneys general have said they don't have enough money now to guard their election processes and machines from manipulation by Russia or others?

So that is “our partisan wish list”—paper ballots, election audits, and money to protect us from the Russians. If Leader McCONNELL opposes these policies, fine, but let him say so. I repeat, protecting our election from Russian interference is not a Democratic issue or a Republican issue or an Independent issue, and it is not a liberal issue or a conservative issue. It is not a moderate issue. It is an issue that goes to the wellspring of our democracy and something the Founding Fathers warned about—foreign interference. James Madison, Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, and Benjamin Franklin all were worried about foreign interference in our elections, and now Leader McCONNELL calls it partisan to worry about it? Please.

If Leader McCONNELL wants to debate other legislation than what we propose and what has passed the House—legislation like the FIRE Act or the Duty to Report Act or the Prevention of Foreign Interference with Elections Act—bring it on. Let's do it. If Leader McCONNELL wants to address election security in the appropriations process, we would welcome his support on an amendment to send more funding to the States. We want to get something done on election security because this is not about party. This is a matter of national security. This is about the sanctity of elections, something for which Americans have died for generations. It is not partisan at all. It is the wellspring of our democracy.

But so long as the Senate Republicans prevent legislation from reaching the floor, so long as they oppose additional appropriations to the States, so long as they malign election security provisions as “partisan wish lists,” the critics are right to say that Leader McCONNELL and Republican Senators are blocking election security because, at the moment, that is true.

VENEZUELA

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, on one last subject, after I conclude my remarks, I will yield to my friend, colleague, and former roommate from Illinois, who will ask this body to take up and pass what I believe is a very important measure, temporary protected status for Venezuelans currently residing in the United States.

Last week, the House passed bipartisan legislation that would grant these protections—a lifeline to families

who are facing a forced return to unstable and dangerous situations in their country.

Few nations, outside wartime, have endured the economic, humanitarian, and political devastation that Venezuela endures today. Hospitals and pharmacies lack basic medicines. The rate of violent crime has risen sharply, and 300,000 children are at risk of dying from malnutrition. Venezuela clearly meets the standard for temporary protected status. The situation is too dire and too dangerous for Venezuelan nationals to return to the country.

So I am glad the House has taken action to pass these temporary protections on a bipartisan basis, and the Senate should follow suit. The President could have acted on his own to help Venezuelans living in America, but he has repeatedly denied congressional requests to extend TPS relief for them during this critical time of transition from the despotic regime of Nicolas Maduro. President Trump's inaction has compelled Congress to act.

So I salute my friend, Senator DURBIN, as well as Senator MENENDEZ, our two leaders on this issue, as they ask the Senate to take up the House-passed TPS bill. I hope, earnestly, that our friends on the other side will let it go through.

I suggest the absence of a quorum for a moment so I might confer with the Senator from Illinois.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

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

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

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 and resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Michael T. Liburdi, of Arizona, to be United States District Judge for the District of Arizona.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

VENEZUELA

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I want to thank the leader, Senator SCHUMER from New York, for his introduction of the remarks I am about to make. But before I do, let me preface it by saying that I couldn't agree with him more. When you take a look at this empty Senate Chamber and realize we are in session this week with the possibility of bringing important legislation to the floor, you have to ask the obvious question: Where is everybody? Why aren't we acting like a Senate? Why are we meeting and having speeches instead of debate on important legislation? What could be more important than the security of an election?

We have a lot of young people across America. We say to them: Register to vote. Your vote makes a difference. You get to choose the leaders for this country's future. Be sure and vote.

But we have to be honest with you. Your vote is under attack—first, by apathy—people don't register and they don't vote—and second, by outside foreign influence and forces.

We know what happened 4 years ago in the Presidential election. The Russians tried to invade the U.S. electoral process and change it. I know it firsthand because it happened first in the State of Illinois. Turns out someone put together a computer program that had a little opening in it, a little hole, and that is all they needed. Sitting in Moscow, these folks in front of computers were searching day in and day out for ways to get into the voters' list in Illinois, and they were successful. They were successful in invading the voting list, the official records of our State on the people who were eligible to vote. They could have done some mischievous things. They could have disrupted our election. Thank goodness they didn't, but it would have been as simple as going through and just changing the addresses, one digit in the address of every registered voter, so when that voter came to vote, the ID card or information given to the judge at the election place wouldn't match up in terms of their address with the official record. That meant they would have voted with a provisional ballot, and those ballots would have stacked up with the thousands of people who could have been victimized by the Russians in my State of Illinois.

We said very publicly—we were the first State to say publicly: The Russians have done this to us.

We didn't see any changes in the voter file. We knew they had the capacity and ability to do it, but they didn't. We have known ever since that they have been attacking our electoral process.

Why didn't we hear about it as much in the most recent election in 2018? Well, specifically because we were in the circumstance where we were fighting it. Our intelligence agencies were fighting it.

So this is a valid issue, an important issue, and it is one that I hope Leader

SCHUMER made clear to those listening to this debate. Why won't Senator MITCH MCCONNELL bring to the floor of the U.S. Senate election security legislation—bipartisan legislation—that will, in the course of passing it, make us safer when it comes to our electoral process? What is this kind of bromance between the President and Vladimir Putin? I don't understand.

But now there appears to be another party on the scene. Senator MCCONNELL is joining in this effort: Keep our hands off of Russia. Don't confront Russia. I don't understand why the Senator from Kentucky is taking that position. He should be pushing forward on a bipartisan basis to protect our election security.

Madam President, now I see my friend and Republican colleague from Utah is here, and I know the purpose of his attendance. I am about to make a statement about TPS status for Venezuelans in the United States. I will preface it briefly, make my request, and allow the Senator from Utah, if he doesn't want to stay here, to respond, and I will continue.

Last year, I went to Venezuela. It was my first time. I met with President Nicolas Maduro, and I said to him: If you have the election you plan to have, it will not be credible, and around the world, you will find the United States and many other nations will reject the outcome. You have to open up the process. Stop putting your political opponents in jail. Have a real election, a free election. Venezuela needs it, not just from a constitutional viewpoint, but your economy is in shambles, and if you want the world to join you in rebuilding the Venezuelan economy, you have to be the credible leader and you can't be if you go through with this election as planned.

That was my speech. It didn't work. He had the election as he planned it. He made sure that his opponents were under house arrest or in jail. He fixed the vote and ended up declaring himself the winner, and no one accepted it. So across the world, you find this resistance to his leadership.

There are some 70,000 people from Venezuela in the United States. They are here on visitor visas, work visas, student visas, and similar capacities. They are now being asked to return to Venezuela. But listen to the circumstances: In Venezuela—we know that it is not safe for Americans to visit. Senator MENENDEZ has spoken on this issue. He is joining me in this effort today. We are warning Americans that it is unsafe to visit Venezuela, but we are telling the Venezuelans who are in the United States that they have to go back.

What we are asking for is temporary protected status for these Venezuelans to be able to stay in the United States during the pendency of this contest that is going on about the future of that nation.

People are literally starving to death in Venezuela. They have no medicine.

It is in the worst possible situation. How can we in good conscience say to these Venezuelans who are in the United States that they have to return?

So the purpose of my effort today on the floor is to say that we should discharge from the Judiciary Committee legislation that allows these Venezuelans to stay here while we have declared it so dangerous in their home country. It is a rational and thoughtful thing to do, although, sadly, the Trump administration has sent me a letter saying they don't approve of it.

It is time for Congress to act. It is time for the Senate to act. I am going to make my formal motion at this point because Senator LEE has come to the floor.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—H.R. 549

Madam President, as if in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Judiciary Committee be discharged from further consideration of H.R. 549 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration; further, that the bill be read a third time and passed and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Utah.

Mr. LEE. Madam President, I reserve the right to object after raising a couple of observations.

It is important to know that this bill was passed by the House of Representatives Thursday night. We just received the paperwork from the House of Representatives yesterday. This is a bill that did not pass unanimously in the House of Representatives—far from it. There were at least 158 Republicans who voted against it.

There are a number of my colleagues in the Senate who, like me, would like to see this and many other bills considered but would also like the opportunity to adequately review the legislation as passed and to propose amendments and have those amendments voted on. So passing this bill right now without that opportunity to review it, to propose amendments and have those considered, and just passing this unanimously is not the way we ought to be passing this legislation.

I am happy to work with my distinguished colleague and my revered friend from Illinois in moving in that direction, but we are not ready to pass this by unanimous consent right now. We have amendments to propose. So on that basis, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I want to thank my colleague from Utah. I am sorry he objected to my request.

Why are we moving so quickly on this? Because it is a matter of life and death, that is why. Why did we decide that this is of such an emergency nature that the House has moved on this already? Because, literally, people who

are forced to return to Venezuela may face death. That is why we are moving on this as quickly as we are.

I want to thank the House of Representatives for passing this measure. It is time for the Senate to act, and we certainly have the time on the floor to achieve that.

As I mentioned, if you go to Venezuela, as I did last year, you can see literally on the streets the impact of this disintegration of their economy and the problems they are facing.

I visited Children's Hospital in Caracas, and it was heartbreaking for the medical staff to sit down at the table and tell me they didn't have the basic medicines we find in our medicine chests at home or in the clinics of America when it came to treating these children. They did not have antibiotics. They didn't have cancer drugs.

The economy in Venezuela is disintegrating before our eyes, and these people—Venezuelans in the United States, students and others—are saying they would like to remain in the United States and stay here until it is more stable in their country. Historically, there were no questions asked, and we did that. We have done it over and over again. But under this administration, whenever the word "immigrant" comes into the conversation, they freeze.

The same Trump administration has told us that the Maduro regime is unacceptable and that we have to get rid of it because of the terrible things that are happening, that the people of Venezuela should have a free election to decide their leader. This same administration will not help the Venezuelans who say they are fearful of heading home to a country that is so dangerous.

Let me read what this administration, which refuses to give temporary protected status, says to people from the United States who may want to visit Venezuela. To me, it tells the whole story. Here is what the Trump State Department says about Venezuela today in the following travel advisory to American citizens:

Do not travel to Venezuela due to crime, civil unrest, poor health infrastructure, and arbitrary arrest and detention of U.S. citizens. . . . Violent crime, such as homicide, armed robbery, kidnapping, and carjacking, is common. . . . There are shortages of food, electricity, water, medicine, and medical supplies throughout much of Venezuela.

Those are the words of the Trump administration about this country of Venezuela, and when I ask that those who are Venezuelan who are in our country not be forced to return to those conditions, there is an objection not only from my friend the Republican Senator from Utah but also from the Trump administration.

Now, make no mistake, if temporary protected status is granted, that does not mean we won't ask any questions of the Venezuelans here. They will have to go through a criminal background check. If they are a dangerous person, they are gone, period. No questions. They are gone. And that is the