

we face with our southern border and taking money away from the main gate of an Air Force Base in Turkey that has been identified as needing to be rebuilt for security against terrorism?

The report also describes how canceling upgrades to a munitions site at an air base in Guam may impact the ability of fighter and bomber aircraft to operate properly.

I ask my colleagues honestly: Are these risks worth taking from our military so the President can have a walk-off line at one of his political rallies?

U.S. allies across the globe that are committed to our defense are starting to doubt if this White House is still interested in being the leader of the free world.

U.S. troops based in NATO ally countries like Poland, Italy, Germany, and Estonia expected \$770 million in investments in training center and logistical support to push back on Russian aggression in Europe. I can tell you, having visited the Baltic States, how critically important these funds are to remind the people of that region that the United States and NATO allies still stand solidly behind them, as Putin threatens them with aggression on a daily basis, and now President Trump has removed many of these funds. Similarly, U.S. troops in South Korea and Japan were planning on \$670 million to protect them from threats from North Korea and China.

The cancellation of all these projects is based on a national emergency declared by the President that was rejected by both Houses of Congress in bipartisan votes. Congress should not be silent when anyone dismisses the real needs of our men and women in uniform for politics. Nor should it sit back when the President of any party tries to undermine its constitutional duty to provide for the common defense of the United States.

I am greatly concerned that these events set a precedent that undermines the Appropriations Committee, which I have dedicated my Senate career to.

We all remember President Donald Trump's idea that we need a 2,000-mile concrete wall, as he said, "from sea to shining sea," paid for by Mexico. He said it 200 times when he campaigned for the Office of President, but as we have seen, Mexico hasn't put up a peso. The President has decided the American military should pay for it instead. The resulting damage to our military and to the Appropriations Committee's constitutional authority continues to accumulate.

It has to stop, and it can stop if my colleagues on both sides of the aisle can come together to reassert their obligations under the Constitution and provide our military families with the certainty that they haven't been forgotten in the midst of the runup to the 2020 campaign.

I hope all of us think long and hard about the importance of this decision and our obligation to stand behind our men and women in the military.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

BRETT KAVANAUGH

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, I want to get straight to the point this morning. I find it incomprehensible that some of our friends across the aisle are repeating the same missteps that turned last fall's Supreme Court confirmation battle into a black mark on the history of this body.

I want to make it clear that I have no desire to relitigate the disputes borne from Justice Brett Kavanaugh's confirmation hearings. I do not want to hear my friends on the other side of the aisle leverage more of the same baseless, salacious allegations in the name of partisan politicking. But when you stop and think about it, since we have chosen to go there, it is imperative that I speak out—that we speak out—about what is transpiring.

I was not in the Senate for the first go-around on this, but I am here now, and I can tell you that I intend to give their arguments exactly the amount of deference and respect they deserve.

Sitting on the sidelines is never easy, but it is especially difficult when you are watching a fight and you know you could get in there and help win that fight. I know this feeling very well. Last fall, I was fighting to go from the House of Representatives to the Senate. I was also fighting to become the first female Senator from the great State of Tennessee—the very first.

While on the campaign trail, I got more than an earful from other Tennessee women who were watching this breathless coverage of Justice Kavanaugh's confirmation. These women were concerned that their voices were not being heard in this debate. They were concerned also for spouses, sons, brothers, and male colleagues. They could see these baseless claims, and they were concerned for the lack of due process. They did not like for 1 minute what they were seeing, and I didn't like it either.

These women came from all political walks of life and all areas of our State. They were disgusted by the nature of the sexual assault allegations, and they were horrified by what they rightly saw as an eagerness to set aside the due process that is so important to this Nation and to the rule of law. It was being set aside in order to make an example out of Kavanaugh.

Were flimsy allegations and social justice buzzwords really the new standard for credibility?

As much as I wanted to reassure these women that sanity would prevail, in the back of my mind I remained fully aware that, if left unchecked, insanity is fully capable of carrying the day. It knows no bounds.

As it turns out, conservatism prevailed in Tennessee, and sanity prevailed in the U.S. Senate. I was humbled when Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh performed my ceremonial swearing-in this past January and

when I received the additional honor of being one of two Republican women afforded a seat on the Senate Judiciary Committee—humbled, truly humbled, but also prepared to stand up for what I know is right.

I will not abide by or participate in the lack of civility that we saw during Justice Kavanaugh's confirmation. We have to realize that this is more serious than just evaluating a final tally of political points on the board. Politicians, journalists, and activists are leveraging unfounded criminal allegations against a duly confirmed Supreme Court justice. I repeat that: They are leveraging unfounded criminal allegations against a duly confirmed Supreme Court justice in an effort to undermine not only his work but ultimately the entire Court as an institution.

Is this honestly what we have come to? Is this the new low of lows? Can no one see the danger in doing this and letting it continue and giving it air to breathe or to thrive? This is a danger. We are a nation of laws, and the Senate is a body built on process and deliberation.

Tennesseans are asking: Who is going to stand and who is going to defend that process in this body?

As a woman, as a new Senator and a member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, I stand to defend the process and for civility. I refuse to leave this political chaos unchecked, and I welcome my colleagues and my friends across the aisle to join me in recognizing that due process and civil discourse are required for constructive, respectful debate.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCOTT of Florida). The Senator from Montana.

TARIFFS

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, we all returned to Washington last week after, in my case, spending 5 weeks in the State of Montana. It is always great being in Montana, being able to get around the State and visit with folks and see the challenges they are dealing with on a daily basis and hear directly from them.

I can tell you that one of the things I heard a lot about—Montana is an ag State—was the price of grain and the price of cattle. The marketplace is very, very depressed. It doesn't matter that Montana is a big State, and it doesn't matter what corner of the State you are in. We have some challenges, and those challenges have been brought about by really, really bad public policy when it comes to tariffs. These tariffs have increased the price of steel, for example, which increases the price of the equipment that folks in agriculture and everybody have to buy.

On the other side of the coin, because of the tariffs that are put on ag commodities, it has driven all ag commodities down. The tariffs on soy, for example, have driven all the commodities down, including wheat, which we raise

a lot of in Montana, but also pulse crops and everything.

In fact, when I was determining what we were going to plant this spring, I was trying to find what we could make money off of. Quite frankly, commodity prices are down across the board, and there wasn't anything that you could turn a profit on. I don't say that being a farmer who wants to complain about prices, because we do that occasionally. I say that because the price of hard red ordinary winter wheat, which probably doesn't mean much to anybody unless you are in agriculture, is about the same price it was in about May of 1978, when I took the farm over. That is not inflation-adjusted prices. That is what it is selling for, a little over \$3.50 a bushel.

If you take a look back at 1978, it doesn't take a nuclear physicist to figure out that things cost a little less back then. You could buy a car for probably about 15 percent of what you are paying for one now, and farm equipment was the same way. It was far, far, far less expensive. My dad bought a brand-new four-wheel drive tractor, for example, 3 years earlier, in 1975. He paid about \$20,000 for it, and today that tractor would run you north of \$200,000.

So we have a lot of challenges out there, and it all starts with the price of ag commodities. It isn't like Mother Nature frowned on us all and put us into a drought or put a hailstorm on us or put locusts on us. It is all man-made.

I think most people in this body would tell you that, as to what is going on with China right now, even though China does need to be held accountable, we can't do it alone. We have to bring our allies in. That is why it is not working, and that is why ag commodity prices are in the tank.

So why should anybody care if you are not involved in agriculture?

There was an old bumper sticker that was on cars a few decades ago that said: If you eat, you are involved in agriculture. That is a fact. If you want to talk about things like food security and being able to have food on the shelves, those family farmers are critically important. If you force them out of business, that is more consolidation, that is less people living in rural America, and that is a problem, and it is less certainty with our food supply.

We feed the world for a good reason—because there are a lot of family farmers out there who work very, very hard each and every day, and we over-produce, and the overproduced items need to be exported. If they are not, the prices go down. That is what we see right now. We see overproduction, because we produce food, and if that food is not exported, the prices go down, and they go down and they go down. Now they are prices that we had 40 years ago.

Now, this administration's solution for this problem is to borrow money from our kids and write farmers

checks. I don't know a farmer out there who wants to go down to the local FSA, or the Farm Service Agency, government office and get a check. We do it, but that is not the preferred place. The preferred place is from the grain elevator or from the livestock auction. But because prices are so low, now farmers have to have a bailout.

People talk about socialism and who is advocating for socialism around here, but the fact is that this is pretty much socialistic. The sad part is that the amount farmers are getting is probably about a tenth, once again, of what they are losing in the marketplace, if we had trade, if we were out promoting trade, and if we were moving the ball forward to get rid of the excess production. But instead, it is tariff after tariff after tariff because we are trying to teach somebody a lesson. Unfortunately, because we don't have our allies onboard with us, we haven't seen much success.

We have a problem. The forefathers set forth three coequal branches of government. Unfortunately, I have been a bit frustrated because the legislative branch hasn't been able to do much about these tariffs, and we need to reinsert ourselves.

I have a bill that I intend to drop in very soon that will empower the legislative branch. Hopefully, we can get it through committee and get it to the floor. It seems that we always ask permission of the administration as to whether we are going to take up any bills on the floor in this body, the greatest deliberative body—it used to be; it is not anymore—when, in fact, we need to take back the power. We need to hold the administration, the executive branch—whether there is a Democrat in the White House or a Republican in the White House—accountable on these issues that revolve around trade.

It is important because we are having a debate right now about whether we should be just a rubberstamp for the executive branch on appropriations. We have given away our power on trade. It is our job to deal with issues of trade. I am talking about Congress's job. I have a bill to bring back some of that power.

I will tell you, I hope that tomorrow all these tariffs and trade issues go away. I don't think that is realistic. In fact, I think we have seen a lot of our foreign trading partners that were traditionally our partners turn to other countries to get their products. I think that is a problem long term and certainly a problem short term because we are feeling it in the short term. When they start getting their ag commodities from Australia and Argentina or some other country, it is hard to get those customers back, even when the trade agreements have been ratified.

I ask the executive branch to quit playing games with American agriculture. I know that most of the farmers support the Trump administration, but I am telling you, we saw a mass ex-

odus off the farms in the 1980s—the family farm agriculture—because of bad policies, due in part to this town, and I am afraid we are going to see that again. I have already seen it in my neighborhood, and I think it is just the start.

It is time that we start to do what we do; that is, we need to export some of this product.

The Farmers Union was in last week, and one of the people in the Farmers Union, from the Montana group, said: What do we do about the excess supply? Well, what we do with the excess supply is what we have always done with the excess supply: We ship it out. We export it. And when those exports dry up, we have wheat. We can't get rid of soy. Corn is in a pinch. As I said earlier, all ag commodities are depressed.

While we sit here and talk about the important stuff that we talk about, just know that the American farmer, the family farmer, is hurting. I will tell you that one thing that made this country great is family farm agriculture. If it gets consolidated, whether it is a family who owns tens of thousands of acres or controls tens of thousands of acres or whether it is a corporation, it is the same thing. You have nobody living in rural America, and it impacts our food security in this country. Quite frankly, it is very bad for democracy.

I invited the President to come to Montana to visit with the producers so he could hear it from their mouths. I haven't gotten a response. The bottom line is, he needs to know that rural America is not New York City. It has challenges, and if we don't do our job and get products exported, we are going to see it change, we are going to see it dry up, and we are literally going to see it blow away. It is not a step forward. It is not making this country great. In fact, it is exactly the opposite.

I hope the President comes to Montana. I hope he visits with the producers. He will find a friendly crowd. I think most of them voted for him. He will be able to hear from the horse's mouth what is happening with trade and hopefully get these trade tariffs and all the things around trade that have been negative for family farm agriculture put behind us. I think time is of the essence. It may be too late for a lot of folks. We may see a lot of good operators no longer able to make a living in agriculture. Time is of the essence.

With that, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

TAXES

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I want to talk a little bit today about something I am embarrassed about on behalf of the Federal Government. Before I explain why I am embarrassed on behalf of my government, I need to give a little background.

Did you ever stop and think about how much we pay in taxes in this country? We have city taxes. We have county taxes. In Louisiana, we call our counties parishes, so we have parish taxes. We have State taxes. We have fees at all of those levels. Sometimes politicians will try to call a hand in your pocket a fee as opposed to a tax, like you are going to be dumb enough to think that makes a difference. It is still money out of your pocket. And then we have Federal taxes. The government taxes the food we eat, the clothes we buy, the houses we live in, the cars we drive. The government taxes when we work and when we play. If you want to go fishing, you have to pay a tax. If you want to go hunting, you have to pay a tax. The government even taxes us when we die.

Let me talk about the Federal taxes for a second. This is just a fraction of the money people pay. At the Federal level, our main tax is income taxes—corporate income tax, personal income tax. Do you know how much we pay every year—the American people—in corporate and personal income tax? I am going to show you. I am going to write it out because it is impressive. Do you see all those zeros? There are 12 zeros—\$2 trillion every year. Do you know how much \$2 trillion is? That is \$2,000 billion. Do you know how much a billion is? If right now I started counting to a billion, do you know when I would finish? It would take me 32 years. I would finish in 2051. I wouldn't make it; I will be dead by then.

I will tell you how big a billion is. A billion seconds ago, it was 1986 and Ronald Reagan was President. That is how big a billion is. A billion minutes ago, the Romans were conquering Mesopotamia. A billion hours ago, Neanderthals roamed the Earth. That is 1 billion. The American people pay \$2,000 billion in taxes every year—not State and not local; Federal corporate and personal income taxes.

Now, look, we know that as a result of the social contract we have made among ourselves, we are better off living and working together and pooling our money so we can hire cops and build roads and educate our children. We know that is the price to pay in a civilized society, but that is still a lot of money.

Now, I don't know about you, but I get mad when some people cheat—when all people whom I know of cheat on their taxes. That means that law-abiding citizens have to pay more to make up for those who cheat.

Do you know what else makes me mad? What also makes me mad is when the Federal entity to which we pay these taxes has money of ours and they

don't return it. I am not talking about tax refunds. I am talking about something else, and that is going to be the subject of my talk for a few minutes today.

Now, look, the Internal Revenue Service, which is housed, as you know, in the Department of Treasury—they are very aggressive. Oh Lord, you better pay your taxes. If you don't pay your taxes, they are on you like a hobo on a ham sandwich. They will chase you like a hound from Hades. You better pay them the right amount, and you better pay them on time. Most Americans don't like that but are OK with it because they know we have to run government, we have to defend our country, and we have to educate our kids. But what happens when the Department of Treasury, which houses the Internal Revenue Service, owes money to the American people and refuses to give it back? That is what embarrasses me, and that is what makes me angry.

Right now, our U.S. Department of Treasury is holding \$26 billion—remember I told you how big a billion is—it owes to the American people in unclaimed, matured savings bonds. And you know what a savings bond is. That is a loan by an American citizen to our government. We funded World War II in part through savings bonds.

This is how a savings bond works. It is very simple. Let's suppose I go buy a \$100 savings bond. I give \$100 to the U.S. Department of Treasury, which collects \$2 trillion through IRS. I give \$100 to the Department of Treasury. It is a loan. The Treasury takes that \$100 and promises to give me in, say, 20 years, \$200 back. I don't get annual interest payments. There are some exceptions to that. In the old days, I got a paper bond. Today, it is all done electronically. I loan the Federal Government \$100. I wait 20 years, and interest accrues. I don't get the checks. In 2 years, I go down with my savings bond, and I say: OK, I want my \$200.

But sometimes people forget. They put those bonds in a safe deposit box or—today, we don't use paper bonds; we do it electronically. People will forget. In the old days when we used paper bonds, sometimes they would lose those bonds. A lot of times, as a birthday present, grandparents would give a bond to their grandchildren, give them a \$100 bond, and they would say to their son or grandson or granddaughter: Hold on to this bond, and in 20 years, you will have \$200. Of course, sometimes the young people would lose them. They are not really completely lost. The bond might have been lost—the physical bond—in the days when we used paper bonds.

The people who loaned the money to the Federal Government might have forgotten about the bonds, but do you know who knows about the bonds? The U.S. Department of Treasury, because they have the names and the addresses. Right now, they have the names and addresses, and they have the money—

\$26 billion—that they are holding that belongs to the American people, and they won't give it back.

I used to be a State treasurer in Louisiana. I and some my colleagues sued the Federal Department of Treasury. Do you know why we sued them? Because as State treasurers, we have programs called unclaimed property programs—you might have heard about them—where we would return money to people in our States that we would take in from businesses that owed people money but couldn't find the people.

Let's suppose you go rent an apartment back in your home State. You put down a utility deposit, and you move and you don't get back your utility deposit. You forget about it. The utility can't keep that deposit. They are supposed to look for you, but they can't find you. They can't keep that money. It doesn't belong to them. It is a deposit. They have to turn it over to the State treasurer.

The State treasurers of every State work very hard to contact the people and to give them back their utility deposits. Every day, State treasurers return utility deposits, apartment deposits, uncashed payroll checks, lost stocks, lost bonds, and tax refunds. Every State treasurer is very active. They have the infrastructure set up, they have websites, they have computers, and they return this money to people every day. When a business has your money and can't find you, they can't keep it; they have to turn it over to the State treasurer.

So the treasurers sued the U.S. Department of Treasury and said: We have these unclaimed property programs. Give us the names and addresses of these people to whom the Treasury Department owes \$26 billion, and we will give it back to people.

Do you know what the Department of Treasury said? Nothing. Not a thing. They just ignored the treasurers. When we finally got their attention, they said: No, we are not giving it back. We are keeping the money.

Well, the treasurers sued them and are still in court. And not only has the U.S. Department of Treasury not given the money back, they have gone and hired lawyers. They are spending millions and millions and millions of dollars to try to keep this money from the American people.

Remember, the U.S. Department of Treasury—they have the names and they have the addresses. They may be old addresses, but all they would have to do would be to give the names and the old addresses to the State treasurers in every State. For example, in my State in Louisiana—and we have asked Treasury to do this. The U.S. Department of Treasury could just give all the names of all the people in Louisiana to whom this money is owed through savings bonds and give them the addresses, and the treasurer in my State will track these people down and give them back their money. But the U.S. Department of Treasury won't do