deeper into their nearly 3-year-old impeachment addiction, we will stay focused on the American people's business.

## BORDER SECURITY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, earlier this year, President Trump led the Federal Government to recognize our insecure southern border for what it is: a national emergency, a humanitarian and security crisis. Congress had heard plea after plea for more border security funding. We heard from senior leaders and career Border Patrol officers. We heard about all the surging illegal crossings, the unprecedented numbers of family units, and the strain on our facilities.

Yet Washington Democrats decided that giving this very real crisis the resources it required might anger the far left, which wants them to oppose President Trump at any cost. So the President tapped into a longstanding, 40-plus-year-old Presidential authority and reprogrammed a narrow set of funds to address the urgent crisis.

I have never been shy about my commitment to the institution of Congress and its unique authorities, not the least being the appropriation of taxpayer dollars. But we are talking about 40-plus-year-old Presidential authorities in current law. Unlike President Obama, who vaguely shrugged off the Federal Code when he established his DACA policy, President Trump's decision was squarely within existing law. Nevertheless, our Democratic colleagues made the Senate vote to undo the President's declaration back in March. Their resolution fell far short of earning a veto-proof majority.

Now, still unwilling to work with the President and Republicans on a long-term bipartisan solution for border security, Senate Democrats are making us repeat the same show vote again.

I would urge all colleagues to once again vote for border security and vote against the Democrats' resolution when it comes up later today.

I understand the Democratic leadership would like to invent a false choice between border security and other important military construction projects. They want to tell the American people that we can either have border security or these other important projects, but for some reason, we can't have both.

There are two problems to that argument:

Problem No. 1 is that it is a false choice of Democrats' own invention. The only reason there could be any tradeoff between border security and these other priorities is their refusal to support commonsense border security. The only reason there is any tradeoff is that Democrats have refused to work with the President.

Problem No. 2 of their argument is that Congress has the full power to ensure that all of the military construction projects are fully funded. Work is ongoing on appropriations and the NDAA. It would be easy to ensure that these projects get all of the money they need.

Later today, the Senate will vote on exactly that. We will vote on several motions to instruct our NDAA conferees. One of those motions will be a Republican proposal that we insist on fully funding these projects for our own servicemembers.

With the Kentuckians I represent, this is pretty simple. Kentuckians want our Nation to have a secure southern border. Kentuckians want full funding for the middle school at Fort Campbell—funding they have been waiting on for years, which is funding I proudly secured in the first place. Kentuckians know perfectly well that with everything the United States of America spends money on, there is no earthly reason the Democrats should force us to have one or the other. They don't want to be used as pawns in the Democrats' political games.

Even my Democratic colleagues who don't support the administration's border security agenda should not take out their frustrations on our Armed Forces. Every single Member of this body should be able to support the measure to fully fund military construction. I would urge all of my colleagues to vote yes on that motion later today.

## RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

## MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 10:30 a.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

## EXECUTIVE SESSION

### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 450.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Eugene Scalia, of Virginia, to be Secretary of Labor.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Eugene Scalia, of Virginia, to be Secretary of Labor.

Lamar Alexander, Mike Braun, Pat Roberts, John Boozman, John Thune, Johnny Isakson, Mike Crapo, John Hoeven, Roger F. Wicker, Mike Rounds, Cory Gardner, Steve Daines, Tim Scott, Shelley Moore Capito, John Barrasso, Jerry Moran, Mitch McConnell.

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

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

## LEGISLATIVE SESSION

### RELATING TO A NATIONAL EMERGENCY DECLARED BY THE PRESIDENT ON FEBRUARY 15, 2019

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume legislative session.

S.J. Res. 54 is discharged, and the Senate will proceed to the consideration of the joint resolution, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A joint resolution (S.J. Res. 54) relating to a national emergency declared by the President on February 15, 2019.

Thereupon, the Committee on Armed Services was discharged, and the Senate proceeded to consider the joint resolution.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota is recognized.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, readers of Forbes might have seen an article earlier this month entitled ''Russian Navy To Be First To Field Hypersonic Cruise Missiles on Submarines.'' Articles like this are a timely reminder of the ever-present need to invest in our military.

It can be easy to take U.S. military superiority for granted, but our military preeminence did not come out of nowhere. Our military is strong as a result of sustained investment and commitment. If we don't stay committed to maintaining our military strength and advantage, we will lose them.

Meanwhile, as the Forbes article reminds us, other countries are busy investing in their militaries. Great powers with aggressive military tendencies are building up their armed forces and investing in the weapons and equipment of the future. We need to ensure that our military is not falling behind.

Later today, we will vote on additional measures related to the National Defense Authorization Act—legislation that we take up every year to authorize funding for our military and our national defense. Both the House and

Senate passed versions of this legislation this summer. Now Members from both Houses are working on reconciling the House and Senate versions of the bill. The Senate-passed National Defense Authorization Act was a strong bill, and I hope the final bill will look a lot like it.

Right now, our military is rebuilding after years of underfunding and the strains of the global War on Terror.

In November 2018, the bipartisan National Defense Strategy Commission released a report warning that our readiness had eroded to the point where we might struggle to win a war against a major power like Russia or China, and the Commission noted that we would be especially vulnerable if we were ever called on to fight a war on two fronts.

Here in the Senate, Members of both parties have been working together to address the military's rebuilding needs and ensure that we are prepared to meet any threat.

The bipartisan National Defense Authorization Act that we passed in the Senate in June authorizes funding for our military's current needs and for the equipment and technology of the future. It invests in ships, combat vehicles, and planes—including development of the future B–21 bomber, which will be based at Ellsworth Air Force Base in my home State of South Dakota—and continued procurement of the F–35 Joint Strike Fighter, which I hope will someday soon be based at Joe Foss Field in Sioux Falls. It authorizes funding for research and development and advanced technology. It authorizes funds to modernize our nuclear arsenal to maximize our deterrence capabilities. It focuses on ensuring that we are equipped to meet threats on new fronts, including in the space and cyber domains.

Of course, while up-to-date weapons, equipment, and technology are essential, the greatest strength of our military is our men and women in uniform. Both the Senate and House versions of the National Defense Authorization Act authorize a 3.1-percent pay increase for our troops—the largest increase in a decade. This is not only something our troops have earned, it is also an important way to retain troops in our All-Volunteer Force when the economy is as strong as it is. Both the House and Senate bills also focus on addressing the recent significant health and safety issues faced by many families with private on-base housing.

I hope House and Senate conferees will produce a strong bill and that both Houses will be able to pass this legislation in the near future.

In a 1793 address to Congress, President George Washington noted:

> If we desire to avoid insult, we must be able to repel it; if we desire to secure peace, one of the most powerful instruments of our rising prosperity, it must be known that we are at all times ready for war.

The surest way of preserving peace is to be strong militarily. Weakness is a tempting target for aggressive regimes and evil men. Strength, on the other hand, can and does restrain those who might otherwise pursue war with the United States or our allies. Maintaining our military strength helps ensure the security of our country and her inhabitants, and it also helps promote peace around the world.

We can't change the fact that there will always be bad actors who will threaten our freedom and security, but we can ensure that we are always prepared to meet any threat.

I look forward to passing a strong National Defense Authorization Act in the very near future.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, last night, Speaker NANCY PELOSI announced that the House of Representatives would begin a formal impeachment inquiry of President Trump. I have spoken to her many times over the past few days. I know she did not make this decision lightly and took no pleasure in making it. It is her carefully considered judgment that it is now in the best interest of our country and our Constitution to proceed with an impeachment inquiry.

I strongly support Speaker PELOSI's decision. If we don't reckon with President Trump's persistent transgressions, the very foundation of this great Republic will be at risk. The President kept pushing and pushing and pushing the constitutional envelope. Finally, the President's conduct made an impeachment inquiry unavoidable.

The events of recent days have brought sharply into focus the question of whether President Trump abused the powers of his office and betrayed the public trust for personal political gain. In open defiance of the law, his administration has thus far sought to block the transmission of an official whistleblower complaint to Congress. The nature of that whistleblower complaint has been deemed both credible and urgent by one of President Trump's own senior-level appointees—the Inspector General of the Intelligence Community.

According to public reports, this complaint may detail how the President of the United States corrupted America's foreign policy by pressuring the leader of a foreign nation to damage a leading political rival—an offense the President may have committed, whether or not there was an explicit quid pro quo. The President went on to admit on live television that he spoke to the President of Ukraine about his political rival and about military aid to the country.

The timeline of events that led to the whistleblower complaint must be scrutinized. The nature of President Trump's communications with President Putin, as well as Ukrainian President Zelensky, should be requested and provided, with special focus on the phone call that took place with Mr. Putin a few days after the Zelensky call on July 25.

The timing of the departures of the U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine and the former Director of National Intelligence and his Principal Deputy must be investigated, as well as the movements of President Trump's personal attorney, Rudy Giuliani, the correspondence between him and the White House, and his interactions with foreign governments. We must learn what actions President Trump or his aides took to withhold congressionally directed security aid to Ukraine and why and more besides.

The answers to these questions and others can be pursued by the House committees involved in the impeachment inquiry, and that is precisely what the inquiry is for. The release of the transcript of one of President Trump's calls with President Zelensky that just came out will not assuage our concerns or the public's concerns. Based on early reports, it may heighten them. We must remember that the President was reported to have had several calls with President Zelensky over the summer, and his administration has a well-earned reputation for dishonesty, altered facts, and incomplete disclosure in public releases.

We need to see the complete, unredacted whistleblower complaint without further delay. The whistleblower must be allowed to testify without fear of intimidation, and then we must pursue the many relevant avenues of inquiry that I just described.

Yesterday afternoon, the entire Senate—all 47 Democrats and 53 Republicans—agreed to my resolution calling for the whistleblower complaint to be transmitted immediately to Congress—a reflection of the seriousness with which these events are viewed on both sides of the aisle. This was unexpected. In the past, when we have asked to look into President Trump, our Republican colleagues have stonewalled. But to their credit, they realized the seriousness of this situation and unanimously agreed to support our resolution. I hope, I pray it is a harbinger of things to come, where we can look at the facts, not the politics, and come to conclusions because, without doubt, the White House and the President's congressional allies will rush to call this effort a partisan witch hunt no matter how serious the allegations or how evenhanded the inquiry. I would remind everyone that just yesterday, every Senate Republican agreed that the White House's decision to block the whistleblower complaint from Congress was wrong. There was unanimous, bipartisan agreement in the Senate on that point. Not a single Senator objected. Let me be clear, nonetheless, because I know accusations of partisanship are already being written. This inquiry was not taken up for partisan reasons, and it does not prejudge an outcome.

Our Framers, in their wisdom, assigned to one Chamber of Congress the right to accuse and to the other the right to judge. The House of Representatives will investigate and determine whether sufficient evidence exists to accuse the President of an impeachable offense or impeachable offenses. If it comes to that, the Senate will be the scene of the trial, Senators the jurors.

We must take our responsibility with the utmost gravity. Our Framers—not trusting our liberty to one branch of government alone, afraid of the ever-present danger of tyranny of an overreaching Executive—provided a remedy to Congress should the Executive attempt to subvert or violate the Constitution of the United States.

We are not yet at the stage where any judgments can be made one way or the other, but I remind my colleagues today that if the day should come when we are called upon to carry out our constitutional duty, history will judge whether we did so faithfully or not. History will judge if each of us acted as a solemn juror of democracy, who placed fidelity to the Constitution and our system of government above the narrow considerations of partisan politics.

DECLARATION OF NATIONAL EMERGENCY

Mr. President, on another issue, not directly related but with the same cause, with the same worry, and with the same concern, an overreaching Executive—the emergency declaration.

The commencing of the impeachment inquiry in the House, while significant, is not the only significant action Congress will take today, nor is it the only action dealing with the President's overreach.

Today the Senate will vote on President Trump's national emergency declaration, which he is using to steal money from our military in order to fund a border wall. Rather than accept the reality that a bipartisan majority has repeatedly rejected this idea, and after dragging the country through the longest government shutdown in American history when he didn't get his way, President Trump deliberately circumvented Congress.

Democrats universally opposed the President's outrageous decision to declare a national emergency, so let me direct my remarks this morning to my Republican colleagues.

There are two crucial reasons for my Republican colleagues to vote to terminate this emergency.

First, the vote today is the surest and likely the only way to restore funding the President has stolen from our troops and military projects across the country. President Trump promised Mexico would pay for the wall, not American taxpayers, and certainly not the military—the men and women and their families involved in keeping our Nation secure. President Trump broke that promise, and now over 120 military projects hang in the balance: a middle school for military families in Kentucky, medical facilities in North Carolina, a hurricane relief project in Florida, an Air Force Base in Colorado, a fire station in South Carolina, and construction projects in Indiana, Louisiana, Georgia, and more. These were all carefully considered by the military and Department of Defense and put in the budget because they were very much needed. These are not frivolous projects at all. A vote for the President today is a vote in favor of cutting funding for our military and slashing support for critical military projects in red States as well as blue.

Second, and maybe even more importantly, my Republican colleagues should vote to terminate the emergency declaration today on constitutional grounds. Under the Constitution, the power of the purse lies with Congress not the President. By declaring a national emergency, the President has trampled on that authority and is violating the constitutional separation of powers. We know what an emergency is—soldiers at risk, the risk of war. Of course, the President should have flexibility then but not on a policy decision where there is great dispute in the Congress and in the country and when the President lost in the legislative battle that ensued. By voting to endorse the President's emergency—this expansive and political stretching of the word ''emergency'' in a way it has never been stretched before—Republican Senators will set a dangerous precedent that could embolden not just this President but future Presidents to ignore congressional authority.

So today my Republican colleagues face a choice of whether or not to defend our troops, whether or not to defend their States, whether or not to defend this Chamber's undeniable constitutional powers.

Last time we held this vote, 12 Republican colleagues joined us in voting to undo the emergency. I hope more do so this time because this isn't about Republicans and Democrats. We don't want any President, Democratic or Republican, to overreach and use the word ''emergency'' to overcome congressional will. This is about checks and balances, not about Republicans and Democrats, and the need for the Senate to rein in an out-of-control Executive.

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.

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

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

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, yesterday evening I had the opportunity to invite 100,000 of our fellow Tennesseans to join me in a telephone townhall. We have found this is something Tennesseans like. Instead of having to drive to a location, they are able to just pick up the phone, and as they are doing homework with children or preparing dinner, they are able to jump on the phone and talk about issues that are important to them.

We covered a wide range of topics yesterday evening. We talked about nuclear power and gun rights and healthcare for our veterans. We even talked a little bit about an invasive fish species, Asian carp, and how that is affecting our beautiful rivers.

There was one thing that continued to come out through the course of this telephone townhall, and I bet you can guess what the topic was that people continued to talk about.

Now, bear in mind that Tennesseans are, by and large, very dismissive of what I call the DC shining object story of the day. Tennesseans are much more interested in the story of their lives, but yesterday's news—that breathless race to make news—really had Tennesseans talking.

Yesterday, House Democrats, supported by their friends in the Senate, gathered to announce their intention to begin formal impeachment inquiries against President Donald Trump. As you can imagine, this struck a chord with my fellow Tennesseans. They may be far outside the beltway bubble, but they have been keeping a close eye on what the Democrats have been up to for the past 3 years when it comes to President Donald Trump.

Let me tell you, they are not very impressed with what has been happening. From their perspective, yesterday's announcement was the culmination of a 3-year witch hunt born of a grudge they have been holding against the President since their chosen candidate failed to win the 2016 election.

Before the President had taken his oath of office—bear in mind, he was President-elect at that time—in December of 2016, Vanity Fair published an article entitled ''Democrats are Paving the Way to Impeach Donald Trump.'' Believe it or not, this was not just click bait. This was a published article in a major magazine in December 2016.

The article details a bill Senate Democrats wanted to use to exploit allegations of conflicts of interest between President-Elect Trump's business dealings and President Trump's duties as President. Bear in mind, the bill was tailor-made to transform conflict allegations into impeachable crimes. And bear in mind, this was conceived before President Trump became President Trump. He was still President-elect. He had not been sworn into office, and they were already writing legislation that would move to impeachment. It was the beginning of their mission toward impeachment, even if they had to fabricate the means to get there.

Let me tell you, they were determined to make it happen. The proof is in black and white. In 2017, a group of House Democrats failed to muster enough political will within their own

party to support a resolution to impeach President Trump. The same effort failed again in 2018, and it failed again in 2019. Their efforts to use the Mueller report to whip the Nation into an impeachment frenzy failed. How frustrating that must have been for a party and a movement that all but promised they would find a way to impeach the President because they absolutely could not believe he won that election in 2016.

It is important to remember and to note the American people chose President Trump and not the Democratic candidate. That didn't matter. Democrats vowed to take him down anyway. They were going to make him pay a very heavy price by making him the victim of a campaign of personal destruction.

Now, conveniently, a year before the election, here they go again. They are indicating they think they have cracked the case.

In November 2018, House Speaker NANCY PELOSI gave a statement to the Associated Press saying: ''We shouldn't impeach the president for political reasons and we shouldn't not impeach the president for political reasons.''

Let me tell you, for the West Tennesseans participating in the telephone townhall I mentioned earlier, it was painfully obvious that congressional Democrats had finally given up and embraced politics as usual. They see this for what it is: vitriol, anger, jealousy, spite. They know that President Trump and a Republican-led House and Senate delivered much needed tax and regulatory relief, which was exactly what the American people wanted and precisely what Tennesseans were telling us: Get government off our backs. Get government off our land. Get government out of our pocketbooks.

We are a nation built on the rule of law and a nation that believes in adhering to that law. Tennesseans, and the American people, want fairness. They want equal treatment. They want justice. And they know injustice when they see it. What they do not want is a breathless revenge scheme orchestrated by a political party.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SASSE). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

S.J. RES. 54

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, today the Senate is going to be voting on the motion to instruct conferees for the National Defense Authorization Act to backfill the military construction money the President stole from our troops to pay for his wall—a wall that he gave his word Mexico would pay for.

This is very, very troublesome. I say this as both dean of the Senate and as President pro tempore emeritus. In that role, I have arguably supported and voted for more funding for our military and their families than any Senator—Republican or Democrat—in this Chamber, but on this one, I will urge a ''no'' vote.

As Members of the Senate—there are only 100 of us to represent 350 million Americans—we have a profound responsibility to support those who sacrifice everything for our country. We should not let this be a partisan issue. As I said, I voted for more funding for our troops than any Member of this body. From the soldier we have sent across the globe to the military family left at home, we—all 100 of us—have a responsibility to these men and women, regardless of our politics and our ideology. It is that responsibility that has drawn me to the Senate floor today. I cannot and will not support this motion.

There is $6.1 billion. Let me say that again. There is $6.1 billion—that is $2.5 billion from the Department of Defense and $3.6 billion from military construction projects—that President Trump has stolen from the men and women of our military in fiscal year 2019 alone, just that one year, to pay for his ineffective, vanity wall—a wall that he boasted to the press last week was the ''Rolls-Royce'' of walls.

But just like every Rolls-Royce in the middle of the desert, Trump's wall is nothing more than outrageously expensive and completely useless. Experts agree that a wall will do nothing to address the humanitarian crisis along our southern border.

Families fleeing violence in their home countries—fleeing murder, rape, and other crimes—are openly turning themselves over to Border Patrol officials. They are not trying to sneak across the border. It is a lot different than absconding across the border in the middle of the night.

What has $6.1 billion in stolen funds purchased for the American taxpayers?

Here is the money that was taken away from our military: Children continuing to go to a middle school in Kentucky every day that Pentagon officials have described as ''deficient, inadequate, and undersized''—we took money from that to pay for the wall. Buildings that do not meet the military standards for fire safety or management of explosives, putting American lives at risk—we took money from correcting that to pay for the wall. And there are numerous cases of infrastructure problems that are detrimental to our military's readiness and DOD's national security mission. That is not even mentioning the military housing with mold issues, inadequate daycare facilities for the children of military families, and all the 127 military construction projects President Trump canceled—not delayed but canceled—to pay for his Rolls-Royce of a wall in the middle of the desert.

The $6.1 billion for a Rolls-Royce in the middle of the desert is an even heavier burden for our military families to bear. Outrage does not even begin to describe how I feel about President Trump's actions.

Today, we are being asked to somehow cover up his theft, cover up the fact that he broke his word about Mexico, and cover up the fact that this is a vanity project. We are being asked to give our constitutional blessing to President Trump's contorting the law beyond recognition.

I believe that the Senate is the conscience of the Nation. Contorting the law to undo congressional funding decisions by fiat is not following our conscience, and I will not stand for that.

We are being asked to take the first step to approve $3.6 billion in emergency spending to replace part of what the President stole. Let's make another thing clear. This spending is on top of the discretionary caps agreed to by Congress and the President. So we are being asked to finance this coverup on our children and grandchildren through deficit spending.

I would say this to the President: I believe you said that Mexico was going to pay for your wall, not our troops, not their families, and not future generations of American citizens.

If this were not troubling enough, last week, the press reported in the Washington Post that the Trump administration does not even intend to use this funding to replace what they stole. ''The plan is to sell it as replenishment money for the Defense Department for the $3.6 billion they took this year,'' said one administration official. ''Then, once they got it from Congress, they would take it again.''

What is the saying? Fool Congress once, shame on you. Fool Congress twice, well, shame on us. Congress got fooled once. Are we just going to stand by idly and allow Congress to be fooled again?

I have heard a lot of speeches on this floor, and politicians often wax poetic about their love of our troops. Yet this body—100 Members of this Senate, the body that should be the conscience of our Nation—has done nothing to constrain this President's ability to continue to steal from those troops. We have done little more than shrug at this abuse of our constitutional authority. We have just looked away from the egregious treatment of our troops as a little more than a piggy bank for the President's political pet project. I don't stand for that. I am not going to support that. I will not abandon our profound responsibility to support those who sacrifice everything for our country.

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

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

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, our friends in the House, led by Speaker PELOSI, have adopted a new strategy for handling allegations of wrongdoing. It is a dangerous approach, one in which opinions count for more than the facts and politics trumps everything else, including the law.

Yesterday evening, Speaker PELOSI announced that the House is now moving full steam toward impeaching President Trump. When the announcement was made, the only information they had in their hands was press reports—no report of the transcript, no facts, no evidence, no nothing—and that is really all they needed. Any hook, any angle, any straw they might be able to grasp in order to justify this unjustifiable action was good enough for them—hearsay and press reports.

House Democrats began this process of impeaching the President based on a so-called whistleblower complaint they hadn't even read, which detailed a call they hadn't seen a transcript of. Meanwhile, we know the media eagerly reported that the ''whistleblower'' didn't even have firsthand knowledge of the situation—something we now know to be true. In other words, the alleged whistleblower doesn't legally qualify as a whistleblower because he or she wasn't there when the conversation took place but, rather, reported something that somebody told somebody else—otherwise known as hearsay. Forget obtaining the evidence, giving people an opportunity to be heard, and the facts considered. Rather than looking into that, they decided on a result they wanted to achieve and were looking at trying to backfill a justification or something that is unjustified based on the facts we know now.

Of course, we know what this is. This is a continuation of the election in 2016 where our Democratic friends can't believe that Hillary Clinton lost the election to Donald Trump. We know that after that, they claimed: Well, Hillary Clinton actually won the popular vote.

Forget the Constitution and the role of the electoral college. Because of the constitutional requirement that the electoral college vote and whoever wins the majority becomes President—they said: Forget the Constitution.

Then there was the former FBI Director, Comey, who leaked memos to a buddy of his and then asked him to leak them to the press because he wanted to make sure that a special counsel was appointed to investigate and potentially prosecute President Trump. We know this investigation went on for years and cost millions of dollars and ended up with the conclusion of no obstruction and no collusion. You can imagine the disappointment of our friends in the media who had written about this assuming that President Trump would be indicted, maybe convicted of some offense, only to find out there was no collusion, no obstruction, and no charges.

So now we know that the Speaker and her colleagues in the House have grabbed hold of this straw without knowing the facts and without even waiting for the evidence to be revealed. The Speaker's decision to impeach the President says everything you need to know about their intentions. It doesn't matter what was said or what was not said; it is about relitigating the 2016 election—something our Democratic colleagues have never ever been able to accept. They are trying to defy the voters who voted for President Trump in 2016.

Does a whistleblower complaint deserve to be examined and taken seriously? Absolutely. In fact, the Senate Intelligence Committee, on which I and the Presiding Officer sit, will do just that. We are in the process of doing that. Before the Speaker's announcement yesterday, the President had agreed to release the full, unredacted transcript of the call, and this morning, he did. Tomorrow, the Senate Intelligence Committee will hear from Acting Director of National Intelligence Joseph Maguire, as well as the Inspector General for the Intelligence Community, Michael Atkinson, to learn more about their role in this process. That is exactly how this matter should be handled—with care, by the rules, I would say by the book, and make sure that everybody's rights are protected before people begin to cast unjustified and slanderous allegations.

Our friends in the House, the House Democrats, aren't just fanning flames here; they have been pouring gasoline out for months through their baseless oversight hearings and all-out obsession with the Mueller investigation, which ended up with a big belly flop.

Yesterday, Speaker PELOSI lit the match, and there is no turning back now. The American people have made abundantly clear that this sort of partisan exercise is not what they want, especially when it comes at the expense of other important work that we are not going to be able to accomplish because of this obsession with eliminating President Trump. In a poll this summer, only 34 percent of Texans supported impeachment.

While so much remains in the air, this move has made one thing clear: Our House colleagues have zero interest in doing the jobs they were elected to do in 2018, and given the fact that the voters gave them the majority, they show zero interest in governing and in passing legislation. Instead of working with both sides of the aisle to pass bipartisan legislation to lower drug costs, to try to address the concern about mass shootings, to ratify the trade agreement known as the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement, and otherwise try to make life better for the American people—that is not the route they have chosen. They have chosen a partisan, political path, which will absolutely suck all the oxygen out of Washington. It will be an obsession of the media and the American people until it is concluded, crowding out anything and everything else that we might do that might improve the lives of regular Americans.

The Democrats' decision to move forward with impeachment and toward removing the President from office will make solving these big challenges facing our country nearly impossible. House Democrats aren't doing what is right and what is best for our country; they are driving an even bigger wedge between the American people to serve their partisan political interests and using the Constitution to hedge a political fight.

Now, make no mistake about it—when Special Counsel Mueller was doing his investigation, it was an investigation to see whether crimes had been committed and if they had been, to present that evidence to a grand jury and indict those who were more likely than not to have committed those offenses and then to try the case to a conclusion in a court. That is not what impeachment is. Impeachment is solely a political exercise, and it is a political exercise to defeat President Trump even though the American people voted for him as the President of the United States.

Notwithstanding the gasoline that House Democrats have been pouring on this issue and the fact that Speaker PELOSI decided to light the match and to ignite it yesterday, one thing is sure, and that is that cooler heads will prevail here in the Senate. We know bipartisan oversight is already under way. House Democrats' obsession with the 2016 election has gone too far, and in fact, they should be embarrassed by what they have done. Meanwhile, we will carefully examine the record, root out the evidence, and follow that evidence wherever it may lead. It is important to have a fair trial before you decide to hand out punishment, not hand out the punishment and then somehow look for justification for an already reached conclusion.

DEBBIE SMITH ACT OF 2019

Mr. President, on another matter, it has been 4 months since we passed the Debbie Smith Act of 2019. This legislation sailed through the Senate without any Senator voting against it. And why would they? It is as bipartisan—you might even say nonpartisan—as they come.

The Debbie Smith Act, as Members know, sends vital funding to State and local crime labs to test DNA evidence. It authorizes training for law enforcement and forensic nurses and enables law enforcement to identify violent criminals and get them off the streets.

The benefit of the Debbie Smith Act is wide-ranging, but it continues to deliver on the initial goal of reducing the national rape kit backlog. That is right—at one point, there were as many as 400,000 untested rape kits sitting in labs or on evidence shelves in police lockers, and each one of those forensic rape kits held the keys to identifying a person who had committed a sexual assault or some other crime.

In Texas alone, the Debbie Smith Act has helped us reduce the backlog of untested rape kits by approximately 90 percent. Since 2001, we have gone from roughly around 20,000 untested rape kits to 2,000. That is still too many; we need to test all of them. We have made serious progress, and I won't be satisfied until that untested rape kit number gets to zero, but to do that, Congress needs to reauthorize the Debbie Smith Act.

It should be obvious, but I will say it anyway. This program transcends politics or party. Allowing it to expire is a disservice to the victims and the advocates who have championed this legislation since it was first enacted 15 years ago.

I introduced the Debbie Smith Act of 2019 in the Senate with my friend and colleague from California, a Democrat, Senator DIANNE FEINSTEIN, which just demonstrates bipartisan support from Republicans, Democrats, victims' rights groups, law enforcement, you name it. But despite all that, Speaker PELOSI has refused to bring this legislation to the House floor for a vote, and unless they pass it soon, this critical program will expire for the first time in a week.

There was absolutely no problem reauthorizing this critical program in 2008 or 2014, but clearly times have changed. Our House Democratic colleagues aren't above politicizing something as noncontroversial as reducing the rape kit backlog.

If House Democrats allow this to expire, funds could soon be taken away from crucial activities like prosecuting cold cases, reducing the backlog, or capacity enhancing efforts. It is simply inexcusable and shameful that Speaker PELOSI and the House would allow the Debbie Smith Act to expire when they have had a bipartisan bill in their hands for 4 months.

Well, just when you think you have seen it all around here—we have seen a lot of partisan antics in the House this year, but this one really takes the cake.

I urge our colleagues in the House to quit the games and pass this critical legislation to support victims of sexual assault without further delay.

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

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

ELECTION SECURITY

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I am here today because our elections are still not secured against the threat of foreign interference.

After 3 years of our intelligence community, our congressional committees, and some of our closest allies sounding the alarm about foreign election interference, we are right back here where we started because this body has failed to act. To me, it is pretty remarkable.

No one in this body would think that the appropriate protections against foreign interference into our power grid should be a partisan issue. No one would advance a theory that protecting our financial system against foreign cyber attacks should be a partisan issue. So why would anyone think or allow the basic protections of the machinery and system of our most essential component of our democracy, our voting system, in any way to become a partisan issue? My hope is we can avoid that.

Some may point to the fact that additional money has been appropriated for State and local election authorities, funds that have been used to upgrade part of our election infrastructure. I am proud to have been part of the initial efforts to secure these funds ahead of the 2018 elections, and I am genuinely supportive of additional funding to secure the 2020 elections. But we need to make one thing absolutely clear. Additional funding for election security is a necessary part of securing our elections, but it is not a sufficient defense against foreign attacks on our democracy. Money alone will not solve this problem.

Moreover, the funding we are talking about in the CR comes with no guidance or direction for State and local election officials. Listen, I have no interest in trying to federalize what has traditionally been a State and local function, but it is absolutely a tradition that this body sometimes makes voluntary Federal funding available only to jurisdictions that meet certain criteria or guidelines. The truth is, right now, with no guidelines, if a State or locality wants to use these so-called election security funds to upgrade their machines or systems to the latest, more secure models, they can do that. But they can also buy machinery and equipment that lacks proper security features—that could lack a paper ballot backup. Heck, they could even use these funds to buy the ''vote here'' signs and those stickers we all proudly wear on election day.

The truth, unfortunately, is that the problem is not with our State and local election officials. In fact, the decentralized nature of our local elections system is actually one of our best defenses against election interference.

The problem is not a lack of policy solutions. Frankly, I think a lot of us on both sides of the aisle, including very good work by folks like the Presiding Officer, know exactly what we need to do to secure our election infrastructure.

We need a voter-verified paper trail for every vote. Everyone should have the confidence that no matter where they vote in America—God forbid, if there were ever a hack into a machine or a machine doesn't work—there is a paper ballot backup so that every vote will be accurately counted.

We need to make sure, as well, just as in any major operation, that we have postelection audits.

We can and must do more to secure our voter registration systems. None of this is Democrat, and none of this is Republican; it is about the integrity and mechanics of how Americans vote. The problem is the lack of political will in the U.S. Senate and the lack of interest from the White House to actually secure our elections.

The truth is, until the majority leader allows this kind of bipartisan election security legislation to proceed, our elections will remain vulnerable to manipulation by foreign actors. I also firmly believe that these bipartisan bills—which, for example, Senator LANKFORD has been one of the leaders on—would get 75 or 80 votes even in our divided Senate.

You don't have to take my word on the nature of the threat. Every one of our intelligence agencies is continuing to warn us that Russia will be back in 2020, and we are running out of time to do something about it. As a matter of fact, Robert Mueller, who led the special counsel's investigation efforts, testified under oath that Russia is attempting to undermine the 2020 elections ''as we sit here.''

For almost 3 years, Senators from both parties have worked on legislation to make sure we are ready for the threats our democracy will face in 2020—both from Russia, and unfortunately from other bad actors who are adapting Russia's playbook because they saw how successful Russia was in 2016. They were both successful in a relatively inexpensive way to disrupt our system and, in many ways, to pit us against each other. Yet the Senate has not brought up a single piece of election security legislation—not a single vote, not a single markup.

(Mr. LANKFORD assumed the Chair.)

The bills we are proposing are largely bipartisan. We are talking about straightforward, low-hanging fruit that in normal times would have overwhelming, if not unanimous, support. We need to pass legislation that secures our election infrastructure with the tools I just laid out: paper ballots, post-election audits, and enhanced cyber security for election systems.

We are saying that the Department of Homeland Security and local election officials should be able to talk to each other in a classified setting so they can know the threats they are facing. We are saying that if local election officials have reason to suspect that a serious cyber security incident has occurred, they need to alert the appropriate Federal officials and, if true, appropriate congressional officials need to know as well.

I also believe we need online ads to follow the same rules as TV, radio, and print advertisement. If you are seeing an election ad that was produced or bought in St. Petersburg and paid for in rubles, I think Americans have a right to know. We are saying that if

Russia attacks our elections again—or any other foreign power—they should immediately face sanctions. Of all things, you would think the President would be willing to punch back against an attack on the sovereignty and integrity of the U.S. electoral system.

Finally, we are saying that if a foreign party reaches out to your campaign offering dirt on a fellow American, the appropriate response is not to say thank you; the appropriate response is to call the FBI. The DHS motto, ''If you see something, say something,'' needs to apply in terms of interference in our Presidential elections.

The truth is, what happened in 2016 will happen again in 2020 if we are not prepared. That is why we cannot allow election security to become a partisan issue. I spent a lot of time working with my Republican colleagues on these bills. I want to particularly recognize the Presiding Officer, who has really been one of if not the leading voice on these bipartisan efforts to secure elections. I know he has been working relentlessly to find a way to help get this legislation to the floor, and I thank him because these are commonsense, substantive proposals that will make our democracy more secure against foreign attack.

We should hold hearings, if necessary, offer amendments, and vote on this critical legislation while we still have time. That is what we were sent here to do, and that is what we must do if we are going to secure our democracy in 2020.

HEALTHCARE

Mr. President, I want to turn to protections for people with preexisting medical conditions because these protections are under threat by this President.

Under the pretext of so-called short-term plans, the Trump administration is pushing healthcare plans that, once again, allow insurance companies to discriminate against Americans based on their medical history. These skinny plans—or I refer to them as ''junk plans''—also undermine the Affordable Care Act's requirements that insurance cover things like emergency room visits, maternity care, and other essential benefits.

Let me be clear. The reason this market has suddenly been flooded with these junk plans—in many cases advertising in low-income markets that these are ACA or ObamaCare plans—is not because Congress passed any law. The President tried and failed twice to pass legislation ending these protections for folks with preexisting conditions. Since they couldn't get their way in Congress, now they are using Executive action to try to undermine the Affordable Care Act.

I have introduced a resolution under the Congressional Review Act which would stop this deliberative effort to destabilize the health insurance market and weaken protections that Americans count on. Today I am filing a discharge petition so that it will bring this resolution to the Senate floor for an up-or-down vote. The truth is, every Member of this body knows someone—either in their family or close relatives—with a preexisting condition. The fact is, many Members themselves have preexisting conditions. In Virginia alone, more than 1 million people live with preexisting conditions.

Before the Affordable Care Act, an insurance company had every right to deny these individuals coverage, charge them unaffordable premiums, or when they got that condition, terminate their plan. I think we all agree we can't go back to those days. The administration knows perfectly well that these junk plans don't offer real benefits. They have been warned repeatedly by hundreds of patient groups, physicians, hospitals, and insurance, including the American Heart Association, AARP, the American Academy of Pediatrics—just to name a few of the organizations that have come out against these plans. All of these stakeholders are telling us the same thing: The Trump administration's plan will weaken consumer protections and disproportionately hurt sick and older Americans.

My Republican colleagues insist that they actually support protections for folks with preexisting conditions. OK. With this CRA, I think there is a chance to prove it. This resolution we are introducing today will force an up-or-down vote on these junk plans that explicitly undermine protections for preexisting conditions. If my colleagues truly support these protections, they should vote yes. It is that simple. Instead of abiding or going along with the administration's effort to undermine the stability of the healthcare market, let's not do that. Let's go back to the ACA. Let's look at fixes where there were mistakes made. Let's look at how we can work together on better access to Affordable Care Act. I serve on the committee, and I know the Finance Committee has taken, I think, at least a first step—I hope there will be more—in terms of putting some reasonable constraints on drug prices. It is not fair or right that Americans pay more for drugs than anyone else in the world and, in a sense, subsidize the R&D for the whole world.

There are a host of areas where we can find agreement. Let's make sure the one part of the ACA that I think everyone agreed to was this notion that folks with preexisting conditions should not be discriminated against. I think the CRA would allow the Senate to go on record on this critically important issue. I look forward to the opportunity to have this voted on and debated when we come back from the break.

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.

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

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

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I have a brief statement. I ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to complete my statement before the vote begins.

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

S.J. RES. 54

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I rise in support of the resolution to terminate the emergency declaration. I want to thank Senator UDALL, the Senator from New Mexico, for his leadership.

The question presented by this resolution is not whether you are for a border wall or against a border wall. The question is not whether you believe the security at our southern border is sufficient or it should be strengthened. Instead, the question is a far more fundamental and significant one. The question is simply this: Should the Congress of the United States of America yield its constitutionally prescribed power of the purse to the President?

The answer to that question, regardless of who is in the White House and who is controlling Congress, should be no.

Congress alone is empowered by the Constitution to adopt laws directing money to be spent from the U.S. Treasury. We must stand up and defend our role that the Framers very clearly set forth in the Constitution. Congress must do that even when to do so goes against the outcome that we might prefer.

I have consistently supported funding for the construction of physical barriers and for strengthening security on our southern border. I will continue to support those efforts and believe and understand they are important, but I cannot support the President's unilaterally deciding to take money that has been appropriated for one purpose and diverting those billions of dollars for another purpose no matter how important or worthy that goal may be.

My colleagues, irrespective of whether you support or oppose a border wall, I urge you today to support this resolution and stand up for the separation of powers laid out in our Constitution. In doing so, you are standing up for our Constitution.

Thank you.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time has expired.

The joint resolution was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading and was read the third time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The joint resolution having been read the third time, the question is, Shall the joint resolution pass?

Ms. COLLINS. 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 senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Floria (Mr. RUBIO) would have voted ''yea.''

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER), the Senator from California (Ms. HARRIS), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), and the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN) are necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ROMNEY). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 54, nays 41, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 302 Leg.]

YEAS—54

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Alexander | Heinrich | Portman |
| Baldwin | Hirono | Reed |
| Bennet | Jones | Romney |
| Blumenthal | Kaine | Rosen |
| Blunt | King | Schatz |
| Brown | Klobuchar | Schumer |
| Cantwell | Leahy | Shaheen |
| Cardin | Lee | Sinema |
| Carper | Manchin | Smith |
| Casey | Markey | Stabenow |
| Collins | Menendez | Tester |
| Coons | Merkley | Toomey |
| Cortez Masto | Moran | Udall |
| Duckworth | Murkowski | Van Hollen |
| Durbin | Murphy | Warner |
| Feinstein | Murray | Whitehouse |
| Gillibrand | Paul | Wicker |
| Hassan | Peters | Wyden |

NAYS—41

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Barrasso | Ernst | McSally |
| Blackburn | Fischer | Perdue |
| Boozman | Gardner | Risch |
| Braun | Graham | Roberts |
| Burr | Grassley | Rounds |
| Capito | Hawley | Sasse |
| Cassidy | Hoeven | Scott (FL) |
| Cornyn | Hyde-Smith | Scott (SC) |
| Cotton | Inhofe | Shelby |
| Cramer | Isakson | Sullivan |
| Crapo | Johnson | Thune |
| Cruz | Kennedy | Tillis |
| Daines | Lankford | Young |
| Enzi | McConnell | |

NOT VOTING—5

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Booker | Rubio | Warren |
| Harris | Sanders | |

The joint resolution (S.J. Res. 54) was passed.

(The joint resolution, S.J. Res. 54, is printed in the RECORD of September 26, 2019.)

## RESOLUTIONS TO INSTRUCT CONFEREES

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the clerk will report the resolutions to instruct.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 330) instructing the managers on the part of the Senate on the bill S. 1790 (116th Congress) to require certain measures to address Federal election interference by foreign governments.

A resolution (S. Res. 331) instructing the managers on the part of the Senate on the bill S. 1790 (116th Congress) to insist upon the inclusion of the provisions of S. 2118 (116th Congress) (relating to the prohibition of United States persons from dealing in certain information and communications technology or services from foreign adversaries and requiring the approval of Congress to terminate certain export controls in effect with respect to Huawei Technologies Co. Ltd.).

A resolution (S. Res. 332) instructing the managers on the part of the Senate on the conference on the bill S. 1790 (116th Congress) to insist upon the provisions contained in section 630A of the House amendment (relating to the repeal of a requirement of reduction of Survivor Benefit Plan survivor annuities by amounts of dependency and indemnity compensation).

A resolution (S. Res. 333) instructing the managers on the part of the Senate on the bill S. 1790 (116th Congress) to insist upon the provisions contained in subtitle B of title XI of the House amendment (relating to paid family leave for Federal personnel).

A resolution (S. Res. 334) instructing the managers on the part of the Senate on the bill (S. 1790) (116th Congress) to insist upon the provisions contained in section 316 of the Senate bill (relating to a prohibition on the use of perfluoroalkyl substances and polyfluoroalkyl substances for land-based applications of firefighting foam).

A resolution (S. Res. 335) instructing the managers on the part of the Senate on the bill S. 1790 (116th Congress) to insist upon the members of the conference to include the provisions contained in section 2906 of the Senate bill (relating to replenishment of certain military construction funds).

A resolution (S. Res. 336) instructing the managers on the part of the Senate on the bill S. 1790 (116th Congress) to insist upon the members of the conference to consider potential commonsense solutions regarding family and medical leave, including voluntary compensatory time programs and incentives through the tax code.

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolutions to instruct conferees.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

### UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate recess from 2:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. today for a briefing.

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

### CLINTON 12

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, in a few minutes, I want to speak about President Trump's nomination of Eugene Scalia to be the Secretary of Labor, but first I want to introduce two speeches that I made in Tennessee into the RECORD. I notice the room nearly cleared when I observed I was about to make some speeches, but at least there are some people watching.

The first speech was on August 26 of this year in Clinton, TN. It had to do with the Clinton 12. These were 12 students, some as young as 14 years of age, who walked down a hill and enrolled in Clinton High School in 1956—63 years ago—and became the first students to integrate a public school in the South.

Many of us remember what happened the next year in Arkansas, when Governor Faubus stood in the door, and President Eisenhower had to send in the troops to integrate Little Rock Central High School. I remember those days very well. I was in high school myself then.

It is hard to imagine the courage it must have taken for those children to walk down that hill and integrate that school. Most of them were there in Clinton, TN, when they were honored in the month of August.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that my remarks on the Clinton 12 Commemorative Walk we took that day be printed in the RECORD following my remarks about Mr. Scalia.

### TENNESSEE VALLEY FAIR

Secondly, the Tennessee Valley Fair. It is a big event in Knoxville, TN, that was held on September 6. It was attended by almost everybody who has anything to do with politics in Knox County, which means the room was full with 500 or 600 people.

It was an opportunity for me to make a suggestion to the people of Knoxville about what to celebrate. Many of us had been watching Ken Burns' ''Country Music'' special on PBS. He reminds us that Tennessee has a lot to celebrate in terms of country music. His first two hours were about Bristol, TN, which is the birthplace of country music. It is where Ralph Peer of New York City went to Bristol, in 1927, put an ad in the paper, saying: ''Hillbillies, come down out of the mountains with your music,'' and here came the Carter family, Jimmy Rogers, and several others.

One of the people on Mr. Burns' show this week was Charlie McCoy, the harmonica player, a great musician. It reminded me of a time when I was Governor and recruiting the General Motors' Saturn plant to Tennessee. We had the executives coming from Detroit. We talked about what to serve them for dinner. We served them country ham. We talked about whom to have play a piece of music after dinner, and I invited Charlie McCoy to play his harmonica.

A Nashville woman came up to me and said: Governor, I am so embarrassed.

I said: Why is that?

She said: You had all those fine people from Detroit, and then you had that harmonica player. She said: What will they think of us? Why didn't you offer them Chopin?

I said: Madam, why should we offer them average Chopin when we have the best harmonica player in the world?

The better people of Nashville had resisted for a long time calling Nashville Music City, but of course Music City is a wonderful signature, a great personality, and it is one reason Nashville is such a celebrated city today.

In the same way, Knoxville has violated the Biblical injunction about don't keep your light under a bushel because it rarely talks much about Oak Ridge. So the speech I made would suggest that the sign at the Knoxville airport, which says, ''Welcome to Knoxville: Gateway to the Great Smoky Mountains,'' ought to say instead, ''Welcome to Knoxville: Gateway to the Great Smoky Mountains and the Oak Ridge Corridor.''

There are nearly 3,000 scientists, engineers, and technicians who work at