

the funding our commanders need. We need to get our funding process back on track for the entire Federal Government.

House Democrats need to stop slow-walking the USMCA, the landmark trade agreement that stands to create 176,000 new American jobs. Mexico is ready, Canada is ready, and a majority in the Senate is ready. The entire continent is just waiting on Speaker PELOSI to stop blocking this win for the United States and to stop blocking these new jobs. I don't care how much my Democratic colleagues in the House may dislike the President. They shouldn't throw 176,000 new American jobs on the scrap heap.

On all these fronts, I hope sincerely that our Democratic colleagues will be able to separate this vital business from their animus toward the administration and join Republicans in moving forward with the work of the American people.

TURKEY AND SYRIA

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, on one final matter, I know I speak for many of our colleagues on both sides of the aisle in expressing my grave concern at the events that have unfolded in Syria in recent days.

Turkey is our NATO ally. Yes, it hosts millions of Syrian refugees and has a legitimate security concern about the situation in Syria. But Turkey's escalation of hostilities with the Syrian Kurdish partners who have helped the United States fight terrorism is completely and totally unacceptable. This violence needs to end.

Syrian Kurdish forces have stood proudly alongside U.S. forces in the fight against ISIS. Over years of joint effort, their shared sacrifices have put ISIS on its heels and rendered its physical caliphate essentially nonexistent. But leaving the field now would mean leaving the door wide open for a resurgence of this dangerous force and a new iteration of the Islamic State; creating a power vacuum begging for the meddling influence of Russia; leaving northeastern Syria wide open for Iran to extend its reach, unimpeded, all the way from Tehran to the doorstep of our friends in Israel; and destroying the leverage we currently have to compel Bashar Assad to stop his slaughter of the Syrian people and negotiate an end to this terrible conflict and humanitarian catastrophe.

I want to make something clear: The United States has taken the fight to Syria and Afghanistan because that is where our enemies are. That is why we are there. Fighting terrorists, exercising leadership in troubled regions, and advancing U.S. interests around the world does not make us an evil empire or the world's policeman. It makes us a prudent and responsible world power that stands up for our own security and the freedom of others.

Alongside the 80 coalition partners that U.S. forces have led in the

counter-ISIS coalition, that is what we must continue to do. We must continue to provide support to the local forces that carry the lion's share of the responsibility to defend their homelands. This effort must continue to include our allies and partners, even the imperfect ones that sometimes behave rashly and dangerously, as both Saudi Arabia and Turkey have recently.

When it looked like President Trump would withdraw from Syria at the beginning of the year, 70–70—Senators joined in warning of the risks of precipitously withdrawing from Syria or Afghanistan. The veto-proof majority vote for my amendment to S. 1, the Strengthening America's Security in the Middle East Act, demonstrated strong and bipartisan appreciation of our enduring security interests in that region. The Senate spoke clearly and said that we must ensure that we have set the conditions for an enduring defeat of the terrorists before any withdrawal.

Regrettably, many of the Democratic Senators running for President, along with my friend the Democratic leader, parted with this bipartisan consensus and voted against this amendment. So I hope those aspiring Commanders in Chief are asked to explain how they reconcile their criticism of the administration today with their votes just a few months ago. Maybe they will even be asked on the debate stage this very evening.

I am heartened to hear that Vice President PENCE will soon lead a delegation to begin immediate talks with Turkey to end this violence.

I expect Turkish allies listen carefully to the anger from Washington, welcome our Vice President, and take steps to repair our important relationship. It would be a tragedy for both of our nations if Turkey's escalation in Syria imperils our common fight against ISIS and emboldens traditional adversaries like Iran and Russia. This would be bad for U.S. interests, but it would be terrible for Turkey.

I also look forward to discussing with Members on both sides and with the administration how the United States can stand with our partners and provide strong, principled, and consistent global leadership.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 2593

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I understand there is a bill at the desk due for a second reading.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read the title of the bill for the second time.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2593) to amend title 31, United States Code, to provide for automatic continuing resolutions.

Mr. McCONNELL. In order to place the bill on the calendar under the provision of rule XIV, I object to further proceedings.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection having been heard, the bill will be placed on the calendar.

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, over the past month, evidence has emerged that the President of the United States pressured a foreign leader to investigate one of his leading political rivals. A whistleblower inside the intelligence community first raised alarms that the President applied pressure on Ukrainian President Zelensky that would benefit President Trump politically. The President himself then released a memorandum of his conversation with President Zelensky, which demonstrably validated the whistleblower's concerns.

In the weeks that followed, the House has received testimony from a number of State Department officials who have filled in additional pieces to this very troubling puzzle. Rudy Giuliani's efforts to dig up dirt on the President's political rivals were well known within the State Department and the National Security Council. The Ambassador to the EU, Gordon Sondland, was heavily involved with Mr. Giuliani, and we continue to receive additional information about Mr. Sondland's participation. His scheduled testimony in the coming days will undoubtedly be relevant and important.

Amidst all of this, the White House has engaged in stonewalling and outright defiance of congressional prerogatives. The State Department instructed its officials not to comply with congressional subpoenas, the White House has refused to cooperate with the House impeachment inquiry, and the President has publicly and repeatedly sought to bully and intimidate the whistleblower.

As additional facts are unearthed, we have a responsibility to consider them with the best interest of our country in mind. The whistleblower was doing a courageous and patriotic act and must be protected. He must be protected. The Constitution made Congress a co-equal branch of government. That role must be respected. The matter at the heart of the inquiry concerns the very integrity of our democratic elections, and it must be investigated thoroughly, completely, and in a non-partisan manner.

Our Founding Fathers feared foreign interference in our elections and considered it one of the greatest threats facing our fledgling Republic. Once again, the wisdom of the Founding Fathers shines through. If a foreign country can meddle in or affect the outcome of our elections, Americans will quickly lose faith in our democracy. If Russia or China or Iran controls our elections, what the heck do we vote for? So the alleged offense by the President is clearly serious enough to warrant an investigation by Congress, and that is exactly what the House of Representatives is doing in its impeachment inquiry, and it must continue unimpeded.

We can do two things, and we must do them. We can protect the Constitution and take action to help average working families at the same time. Here in the Senate, we can do both: protect the Constitution and help average working families. It is not either-or. It is not one or the other.

SENATE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, from the very beginning, Democrats have been committed to doing the people's business, but while the Democratic majority in the House of Representatives has passed hundreds of bills dealing with healthcare, infrastructure, gun violence, climate change, and much more, Leader McCONNELL has turned our Chamber into a legislative graveyard. Not one of these bills has received a vote in the Senate: no vote to save protections for people with preexisting conditions, although the American people are pleading with us to do it; no vote on bipartisan background checks, although more people die from gun violence committed by people who shouldn't have guns; no vote on bipartisan election security as Russia threatens us; and no vote on the Violence Against Women Act, when abuse of women continues.

Over the course of his Presidency, President Trump has also failed to offer proposals to address any of these pressing issues. In many cases, his policies and his Executive actions have made things worse.

As Congress comes back into session, Senate Democrats will force our Republican colleagues to vote during this work period on three measures that are important to millions of Americans. These votes will occur under the procedures of the Congressional Review Act. The Congressional Review Act—I know the public is not familiar with the arcane parts of these things—is one of the rare instances where the minority can force a vote. We want to debate these other issues. We want to debate gun violence. We want to debate healthcare. We want to debate infrastructure. We want to debate preexisting conditions. We are not saying our Republican friends are going to think exactly as we do, but let's have a

debate and vote. Leader McCONNELL, much to the discredit of this Chamber, as well as his own, has said no, but here the Congressional Review Act at least allows us to review some of the overreaching actions of the executive branch and get a vote on them.

Each of these CRA votes will present our Republican colleagues with a choice: whether to protect Americans with preexisting conditions or not to protect them, whether to protect middle-class Americans from a tax hike or not to protect them, and whether to fight climate change or to do nothing.

We will also demand that our Republican colleagues take up legislation to protect hard-earned pensions for millions of American workers. Several of my colleagues will come to the floor this evening to do just that. Senators MANCHIN, BROWN, STABENOW, PETERS, SMITH, BALDWIN, and TESTER have been real leaders on these pension issues. Workers, who for decades put money into their pensions and thought when they retired they would at least have some modicum on which to live decently, will lose all that unless we act.

We hope our Republican colleagues will listen to the debate and help us move to deal with the millions of workers struggling to preserve their pensions.

As we continue to fulfill our solemn constitutional duty to hold the President accountable, Democrats will not—will not—stop putting pressure on Leader McCONNELL and our friends in the majority to get the Senate back to work for the American people. Democrats will use every tool we have—there are not that many—to stop Leader McCONNELL from making the Senate a legislative graveyard when the American people need help and action in so many ways.

TURKEY AND SYRIA

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, now on Turkey and Syria, a major issue that deserves the Senate's attention this week and that shows we can, again, fulfill our constitutional obligations as well as help the American people. One thing we are going to be talking about this week is President Trump's precipitous and dangerous decision to withdraw from northern Syria.

A few weeks ago, the President abruptly announced that the United States, which has long maintained a presence in northern Syria to root out ISIS terrorists, would stand aside, and Turkey launched a military incursion into the region. For years, a global coalition of the United States and our partners and allies, particularly the stout Kurds in Syria, have worked tirelessly and sacrificed much to defeat ISIS. Now, in only a matter of days, the President's quick, unstudied, and ill-advised Syria decision has jeopardized all of that progress.

For years, American soldiers have fought hard and some have given their

lives to vanquish ISIS. For years, our great military and diplomatic leaders have strategized about how to get rid of ISIS, and in one fell quick and unthought-out swoop, the President has undone that. It is despicable. It is dangerous.

The consequences have already proven dire. Bashar al-Assad, the Syrian dictator and war criminal, has strengthened his position greatly, cutting a deal with the Kurds and moving his forces into the gap left by our withdrawal.

Who else has benefited from President Trump's ill-thought-out, precipitous, and wrongheaded action? Iran, his greatest enemy, one of our great enemies in many ways. As you know, I am no friend of the Iranian Government.

Iran has benefited. Who else has benefitted? President Putin. Russian troops have now swept into the region, according to reports. Russia envies the oil in northern Syria that it might control.

When the President does some kind of action, it makes everyone scratch their heads, and if it benefits Putin, one doesn't know if he is doing it to actually help Putin or if he just doesn't get it. I tend to think it is often the former, unfortunately.

Our Kurdish partners are paying the ultimate cost of their betrayal, and tens of thousands of civilians have been displaced. Maybe most concerning of all, reports say that more than 10,000 ISIS fighters currently held and guarded by the Kurds could walk out of their cells. By pulling out of northern Syria, President Trump has encouraged nothing short of an ISIS jailbreak.

I say this to my fellow Americans. Some may say: We don't want any troops anywhere. Bring them all home. We don't care.

Well, I care. Most people care.

But some might say: I don't care what happens to the Kurds.

The one thing everyone should care about, whatever their views on geopolitics in the Middle East and in Syria, is our own security. We have spent a decade of treasure and often lives rooting out ISIS. Why? Because ISIS presents a danger to our homeland. We, in New York, know, more than anybody, how a small group from far away could do huge damage and kill thousands of innocent Americans here. And now President Trump, through this thoughtless action, is allowing ISIS to gain new strength. What is going on here? This is a threat to our own national security here in our homeland, and we must do everything to stop it.

And who is the most angry at the President? From what I am told, our own military is. Our own military, who have fought shoulder-to-shoulder alongside the Kurds, watching the Kurds risk and lose their lives to help protect Americans—they weren't even consulted. The military wasn't even consulted. You heard what General