

a foreign leader to intervene in an American election on his behalf. The facts that are already in the public domain are so deeply troubling and must be taken very seriously. I know that our colleagues in the House of Representatives did not run for office to begin an impeachment inquiry, but this task was thrust upon them by the President's alleged conduct and the demands of the Constitution of our Republic.

Here in the Senate, our job is even more austere. We are assigned the power not only to examine the evidence but to render judgment. We all have a solemn duty to follow the facts impartially and let ourselves be governed by reason, rather than by passion or by politics. That role means that we have a responsibility to behave impartially, in a nonpartisan manner from the outset. As my friend Leader MCCONNELL said during the 1998 impeachment debate, "it's been my view that I don't, as a potential juror, if it's serious enough to warrant a potential impeachment proceeding, I don't think I ought to pre-judge the case."

Yet already a few of my Senate Republican colleagues seem determined to turn this serious inquiry into another partisan exercise. My friend the Republican leader, here on the floor yesterday, made the sadly predictable attack of calling the work of the majority in the House partisan. Another of my colleagues, Senator GRAHAM, said he was trying to organize a letter of Senate Republicans promising they would not vote to convict the President before the House even completes its inquiry—before any articles of impeachment are even drafted, let alone voted on, before a scrap of evidence was considered in the Senate trial, if it comes to that. Senator GRAHAM seems to be advocating "Alice in Wonderland" justice—first the verdict, then the trial. I hope he will rethink that.

Over the State work period, the Republican leader ran an advertisement in which he declared: "The way that impeachment stops is a Senate majority with me as majority leader." That is a far cry from what he said in 1998: "not prejudging the case."

We are several steps away from a potential trial in the Senate. The House continues to do its work diligently, even handedly, with only the facts in mind. So I remind my Republican colleagues in this Chamber that committing today to vote not guilty is contrary to their oath to do impartial justice. That is their oath. Instead of prejudging, I remind my Republican colleagues in this body that you have a responsibility to put country over party. Our national security, the rule of law, and our democracy are at stake.

TURKEY AND SYRIA

Mr. President, we are witnessing in realtime the collapse of American foreign policy in the Middle East. Five years of hard fighting in Syria to first destabilize and then to degrade ISIS has potentially been undone in one

phone call. The President's abrupt decision to withdraw U.S. forces has abandoned the field to our enemies—ISIS, Iran, Putin, and Bashar al-Assad—and it has put our friends in danger, including two of the closest friends we have in the Middle East, the Syrian Kurds and Israel.

I want to be very clear. The President's decision poses a threat to our national security here in the United States. By green-lighting President Erdogan's operation and abandoning the Syrian Kurds to face the onslaught on their own, the President has made an already fragile situation in northern Syria more dangerous and handed a "get out of jail free" card to potentially more than 10,000 ISIS fighters. ISIS has threatened the United States and our allies repeatedly, taken Americans hostages and executed them, and will undoubtedly continue to threaten our security if they experience a resurgence.

We New Yorkers know best, unfortunately, how a small group of fanatics half a world away can do incredible damage and kill thousands of Americans here on our soil. Now, with ISIS prisoners escaping, unfortunately, the chances of that are increasing, not just according to me but to an expert like General Mattis.

Make no mistake. The President's incompetence has put American lives in danger. Today, the House of Representatives will consider a resolution that condemns the President's decision and demands that he reverse course. It should pass with bipartisan support and should be the first order of business for us here in the Senate—the first order of business. Sanctions against Erdogan are fine and good. President Erdogan should be punished for his military adventurism and his aggression, but sanctions alone are insufficient, and they are particularly insufficient in regard to ISIS. Sanctions will not put ISIS fighters back on the run or back in their cells. They will not stop Iran and Putin's growing influence in the region, nor will they undo America's betrayal of our partners and allies. Sanctions can be an effective tool, but they are not the only tool, especially when the crisis in this case is of the President's own making. The simplest and most effective remedy would be for the President to admit his mistake and correct course.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. President, earlier this summer, both Houses of Congress and the White House arrived at a budget agreement that gave us a blueprint for funding the government, but in September, Republicans unilaterally walked away from our agreement and proposed taking \$12 billion from domestic programs—including Head Start, HHS, and even the Pentagon—to fund the President's border wall. This is a nonstarter. There aren't enough votes in the Chamber to pass it.

As we look to get the appropriations back on track, I was disappointed that

Senate Republicans let the entire State work period pass without responding to Democratic offers. Instead of spending that time negotiating with House Democrats on allocations, Senate Republicans have sat on their hands, and now we are back in session this week at the same impasse. Republicans are insisting on the same thing they unsuccessfully shut down the government for last year: \$12 billion for a border wall that President Trump promised Mexico would pay for.

If Senate Republicans don't wake up and resume good-faith negotiations with Democrats, I fear we are headed down the same road.

PENSIONS

Mr. President, for decades, millions of Americans labored in construction and mining and truck driving and other industries with the promise of a secure retirement when they reached old age through their pension. But through no fault of their own, forces like a financial crisis, a dwindling labor force, and inaction on the part of the Federal Government, their pension plans are now at risk of becoming insolvent within a decade. This is an immediate problem. It is going to destroy the security of millions of retirees—people who worked all their lives. They put a little bit of money away that they could have spent when they needed it, but they put it in for their retirement hoping that the day they retire they wouldn't become rich, but at least they could live decently. Now that may be vanished—vanished. Congress has the power to stop this problem dead in its tracks. Just 2 months ago, the House passed the Butch Lewis Act, which would provide immediate relief to "critical and declining" pension plans so we can keep our promise to our workers. Leader MCCONNELL and Senate Republicans, once again, inexplicably, have refused to take action on this bipartisan legislation. Senate Republicans blocked us from even debating it last night. So in a short time, I will join my colleagues, including Senators BROWN, STABENOW, MANCHIN, MURRAY, and WYDEN to demand that Leader MCCONNELL allow us a vote on legislation to protect these millions of workers and secure the retirements they have earned.

President Trump often claims to be looking out for the American worker, but his policies set them further and further adrift. This one is notorious. Retirement, a decent retirement, is part of the American dream and part of the American way. Here is a chance for President Trump to actually defend American workers instead of hurting them.

If President Trump is truly the champion of the American worker, he will prevail on our Republican colleagues to start working with Democrats to make sure—make sure—we protect the pensions that millions of families rely on for their security and have paid for.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. BLACKBURN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

NOMINATION OF BARBARA MCCONNELL BARRETT

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, later today, the Senate will vote to confirm Barbara Barrett as Secretary of the Air Force. I have come to the floor directly from a meeting with her this morning.

Ambassador Barrett has had an impressive career both inside and outside of government. Among other things, she has served as U.S. Ambassador to Finland, Deputy Administrator of the FAA, and as a member of the Civil Aeronautics Board. Most importantly, she has a deep understanding of the U.S. Air Force, thanks to her work as a civilian adviser to the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs.

As a member of the Defense Advisory Committee on women in the services, she fought to expand opportunities for women in the military. She became the first civilian woman to land an F-18 on an aircraft carrier, which was part of a mission to demonstrate women's fitness to fly in combat. Thanks, in part, to her work in 1993, the military changed its regulations to allow women to fly combat aircraft.

I am always particularly interested in making sure we have an outstanding Air Force Secretary because my State of South Dakota is lucky enough to play host to Ellsworth Air Force Base, home of the 28th Bomb Wing and future home of the B-21 bomber.

Over the State work period in October, I was able to visit Ellsworth to sit down with the new commander of the 28th Bomb Wing, Col. David Doss, as well as CCM Rochelle Hemingway. We had a great discussion, and we had a chance to talk about the needs of the base going forward, including what will be needed as Ellsworth prepares to serve as the first home of the B-21.

Ensuring that the base has the necessary resources and infrastructure to fully support the B-21 mission will be a priority of mine not just as we await the mission but for decades to come.

Since I came to Congress, I have worked with the base and the Greater Rapid City community to build up Ellsworth. We have gone from fighting to keep the base open, to adding an MQ-9 Reaper mission and supporting the B-1 as a workhorse of the bomber fleet, to hosting the largest training airspace in the continental United States, and to being chosen to host both the B-21 training mission and first operational squadron.

I am incredibly proud of all that Ellsworth airmen have accomplished, and I am looking forward to seeing everything the team at the base will be able to do in the future.

TURKEY AND SYRIA

Madam President, as I reflect on the critical role our military plays in the world, I want to take a moment to talk about what is happening in Syria right now and the U.S. response.

This is a complex situation. Given its proximity to several fronts of conflict and unrest, Turkey is facing immense pressure to address security concerns and is straining to support a huge number of refugees.

Turkey also has an understandable interest in rooting out terrorists within its country and stemming any factions that support them, but the Kurdish militias the United States has backed in Syria are not the same as the group Turkey has struggled to contain in its own country.

Turkey's decision to attack Kurdish forces in Syria will do nothing but exacerbate the humanitarian crisis on the border. It will also strengthen the Assad regime and foster greater influence in the region by Russia and Iran. Most alarmingly, Turkey's incursion will force the Kurds to pull resources that would otherwise be committed to keeping ISIS fighters imprisoned. It is deeply concerning that the withdrawal of U.S. forces has set this into motion.

As you know, a major reason for ISIS's rise was President Obama's decision to withdraw U.S. forces from Iraq on a timetable that he announced to our enemies and before the security situation was stable. The departure of U.S. forces created a vacuum in the region that ISIS quickly stepped in to fill. It is important that we don't allow history to repeat itself.

U.S. and Kurdish forces have been working together against ISIS for years now and have succeeded in drastically shrinking ISIS's territory and weakening this terrorist organization. Thanks to their work, in many respects ISIS can be said to be on the run, but this achievement could quickly be undone by a U.S. withdrawal from the country.

I hope we will be able to have some fruitful discussions here in Washington this week about the need to maintain our strategic gains against ISIS and avoid creating a vacuum for our enemies to fill, and I hope our NATO ally Turkey is listening closely.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

IMMIGRATION

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I rise today on the Senate floor to address an issue that is really fundamental to who we are as Americans. It is the issue of immigration.

We just celebrated, this past week, a day dedicated to Christopher Colum-

bus, who, supposedly, discovered America. Of course, we know better. Native Americans were here and discovered it before him, but he was the first European to discover America and really triggered an immigration to this part of the world that has really changed America and the world forever.

This immigration from all over the world has created one of the most diverse nations on Earth. I am a beneficiary of that immigration. My mother was an immigrant to America in 1911, coming here from Lithuania to East St. Louis, IL, where she was raised and where I had the chance to grow up, as well.

Today, her son—this immigrant mother's son—has been serving as a U.S. Senator from Illinois with humility and pride. It is an indication of our family's story, but it is also America's story—how immigrants came from far and wide to America and made lives and great futures and built families that continue to serve this Nation to this day.

You would think, since immigration is such a central part of who we are as Americans, that there would be a general consensus about the issue, but it turns out to be one of the most hotly contested and debated issues almost since the arrival of the Mayflower.

How many people should be allowed to come to this country? Where are they going to come from? What will they do when they come here? What impact will they have on those of us who are already here? All of these questions of national security have led us into an ongoing national debate about immigration.

Today, this morning, I come to the floor to discuss one aspect of it. This last Sunday morning, I was back in Illinois and was invited to a Democratic Party event in Schaumburg, IL. It was a fairly routine breakfast meeting of the Democratic township organization. I have been to many of them. It is great to see old friends.

When I arrived at the event, I was surprised to see demonstrators, protesters—perhaps 200 of them—holding signs with my name on them. It is not exactly the way you want to start a Sunday morning, greeting 200 people with signs about this fellow named Durbin. I had a chance to talk to them. I didn't run away from them because I wanted to find out who they were and why they were there.

By and large, they were people from India who are currently living in the United States and want to become legal citizens here. Most of them came to the United States bringing special skills that were needed. Many of them are in the Silicon Valley high-tech industries—engineers who came to the United States once companies certified that they couldn't find an American to fill the job, which is a requirement. Having been unable to find an American, these companies asked permission to bring in these highly skilled people from India to serve as engineers in the United States.