

Members of the Senate on both sides of the aisle talk about how the one thing we agree on is that we need to protect people with preexisting conditions, and though many of our Republican colleagues might not support the Affordable Care Act, they do agree that we should support people with preexisting conditions, which I generally read to mean that we should make sure we don't pass legislation and we don't let the administration do anything that will make it even harder than it already is to live with a cancer diagnosis or a diagnosis of serious heart disease.

Yet it is completely clear that the Trump administration's guidance is going to make life a lot worse for people with preexisting conditions, for those who go on the junk plans, and for those who stay behind.

Here is a quote from an article in The Atlantic magazine, which did a summary of these junk plans and what they are like and, frankly, how important they are to insurance companies. The article says that these short-term junk plans "make up a high-profit portion" of the insurance industry's business.

They are largely designed to rake in premiums, even as they offer little in return. And even when they do pay for things, they often provide confusing or conflicting protocols for making claims. Collectively, short-term plans can leave thousands of people functionally uninsured or underinsured without addressing or lowering real systemwide costs.

That is the story of junk plans. They are a pretty good deal for the insurance industry, which is why they have been pushing the Trump administration to allow more of these junk plans to be sold. They are a good deal for the insurance companies because ultimately they don't require the insurance companies to pay out a lot in benefits, but they ultimately make a ton for the insurance companies in the premiums they collect.

It is time for everybody in this body who has stood up and said that they support individuals with preexisting conditions to vote that way. Next week, we will have an opportunity to stop in its tracks the Trump administration's rule allowing for more of these junk plans to be sold to consumers. Because we know the House of Representatives will join us, we now have the chance to actually do something about it and stop this erosion of healthcare for people with preexisting conditions before it is too late.

I get that the country and this Congress are rightly consumed with the ongoing scandal surrounding the impeachment inquiry and the recent heartbreaking, unconscionable events in Syria, but that doesn't mean folks in our States are as concerned with those headline-grabbing issues as we are. They still have to make their budgets balance every single month, and they are deeply worried—at least those families I talked to in Connecticut who are still struggling with serious illnesses—about our ability to

make sure the protections for preexisting conditions, which were a lifeline for millions of Americans when we passed the Affordable Care Act, are not undermined by this President. We have a chance to step up and do something about it next week.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. ERNST). Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Democratic leader is recognized.

APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, before I get into my main remarks on Syria, I just heard the majority leader, Leader MCCONNELL, say that he wants to see if we can do appropriations bills, that he will see if the Democrats want to legislate. Give me a break. Since we have started to legislate, we have been waiting for 6 months, 9 months. It is well-known in the country that the Senate is the legislative graveyard, that Leader MCCONNELL has not put on the floor bill after bill on major issues that affect the country and that demand attention. Most everybody knows that he is proud that he is the Grim Reaper. So now, in his asking if the Democrats want to legislate, it is all up to Leader MCCONNELL.

On the appropriations bills, of course, we want to legislate when it is being done in a fair way. There are some bills that came out of the Appropriations Committee in a bipartisan way. I think there are four of them that the leader is thinking of putting on the floor, and we would like to move forward on those and have a vigorous process as we go forward.

There are certain bills that were not done with any consultation—the taking of money out of things like MILCON and HHS and putting it for a wall that he knows the Democrats will not go for. Those kinds of things we can't legislate until they become bipartisan, until we work together. There are certain bills—HHS, Defense, MILCON, DHS—that we can't move forward on until we have some bipartisan agreement. Yet, on the bills on which there is agreement, we would be happy to move forward. Of course, that doesn't solve the problem.

After that happens, our House colleagues—Speaker PELOSI, Chair LOWEY—have since suggested that there be a 302(b) conference because even the 302(b)s are different than these bills, and that is the right place to go once the Senate passes these less controversial bills.

I hope we can move forward. I hope we can. The first package of bills—four of the five—is not controversial. The fifth, they didn't even bring to the

floor of the Committee on Appropriations—MILCON. Yet, on those four, moving forward would be a fine thing. Hopefully, we could work out an amendment process whereby Members could offer amendments.

So we will finally legislate after 9 months, not just move judges and other appointees, and that is a good thing. I am glad that Leader MCCONNELL has finally, maybe, felt the pressure and wants to legislate.

TURKEY AND SYRIA

Madam President, let's go to Syria.

Saturday night, President Trump announced on Twitter that he was reversing his decision to host next year's G7 summit at his golf resort in Doral, FL. The President's original decision was the textbook definition of self-dealing—an outrageous move that provoked immediate and rightful condemnations. Over the weekend, multiple outlets reported that the President decided to back down only after hearing of intense opposition from members of his own party, many of whom told him privately they would not defend him on the issue.

It is obvious to almost everyone in America that you don't suggest a resort that you own as the place to have a conference. It makes no sense. Is the President so interested in making a few extra dollars—reports are that he brags what a multibillionaire he is—that he would risk violating the rules and laws of this country, the emoluments clause? It makes no sense.

It is unfortunate that this wasn't the only decision that made no sense. There is an obvious parallel between the President's decision about the G7 and his decision to precipitously withdraw our forces from Syria. Both were done in a sort of whimsical way whereby, from all reports, the President didn't consult with the experts in this latter case—with the military, the State Department, and the CIA.

Both have resulted in condemnation from across the political spectrum. In fact, last week, over 120 House Republicans voted in favor of the resolution criticizing the President's Syria policy. Leaders McCARTHY, SCALISE, and CHEENEY are hardly moderates, in the middle, who always seek compromise. These are pretty hard-nosed people, and they voted to condemn it, so it must be pretty bad. Of course, it is. Former military commanders and some of the President's staunchest allies in the Senate have echoed those sentiments.

Just like the President reversed course on the G7 after a torrent of criticism from his own party, President Trump must dramatically and drastically rethink his policy in Syria, which is far more dangerous because of one word above all else—"ISIS." By his abruptly having pulled troops out of northern Syria, the President has betrayed and deserted our partners and

allies and has created a security vacuum that our longest standing adversaries—Iran, Putin, and Assad—are exploiting. He put American lives in danger by letting hardened ISIS fighters escape captivity and regroup.

As American troops leave Kurdish areas, videos show Kurdish locals hurling rotting vegetables and shouting “America lies.” That is painful. Do you know to whom it is the most painful? Our soldiers who fought alongside the Kurds. The Kurds sacrificed some of their own people so that Americans wouldn’t have to die.

One leading Russian newspaper, which is, no doubt, part of the Putin propaganda machine, ran a column this week that proclaimed Russia’s unexpected triumph in the Middle East and that Putin won the lottery. Meanwhile, public reports suggest that at least 200 people with suspected links to the Islamic State have escaped the displacement camp in northeast Syria as a result of the Turkish invasion, and we in New York know better than anyone what a small group of bad, bad terrorists—evil terrorists—can do in untold damage to our homeland.

This policy is reckless, unthought out, and dangerous. It has been 3 weeks since the announcement of the President’s decision, and he has yet to articulate any plan for what happens next. As a 5-day pause on hostilities comes quickly to an end tomorrow, every Member of this Chamber ought to be asking: What is President Trump’s strategy to secure the enduring defeat of ISIS? How does the President plan to find the escaped ISIS prisoners? How does he plan to fix this mess? These ISIS people are dangerous and can create a problem right here in our homeland.

This morning, according to the New York Times, the President is now considering leaving a small force in eastern Syria. We need to know if that is true. If so, how many? What would be the force’s mission and for how long? Maybe the most pressing question is, How would a deployment in eastern Syria secure ISIS prisoners and help track down those who have escaped? This presents such a great danger to our country.

The President is flitting from one idea to the next and has no coherent, apparent strategy. His own Cabinet officials have yet to even agree on a time to brief the Senators on the administration’s plan. We have been waiting, and we want to hear from the top people—Secretary Esper, Secretary Pompeo, and CIA Director Haspel. This is serious stuff. The Congress has to be briefed. We are worried the reason we are not being briefed is that there is no strategy and that these three people who are in charge of major portions of the American Government—the military, the CIA, the diplomatic corps—don’t have any idea what the President is up to.

The quickest, simplest, and most powerful way to send that message to

the President would be for the Senate to take up and pass the bipartisan House resolution on Syria. Last week, I asked for the Senate’s consent to take it up, but unfortunately it was blocked. We are going to keep going back to it.

It makes a difference when my Republican colleagues stand up to the President. That can affect him more than anything else, so they shouldn’t duck it or be allowed to duck it. When the Republicans pressure the President, as they did on the G7, he considers changing course. So, when it comes to our national security, vital matters of foreign policy, and, yes, especially when it comes to the Constitution, the rule of law, or the integrity of our democracy, the Republicans must put the country over the party.

On Syria and the fight against ISIS, that means Leader MCCONNELL and Senate Republicans should let us vote on the House resolution criticizing the President’s withdrawal.

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.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BOOZMAN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I rise this afternoon to talk about the question of impeachment, which, of course, is being debated across the country.

Evidence continues to mount regarding actions the President has taken. Of course, this issue is not only worthy of debate but also worthy of inquiry and review and even debate and discussion here in the Senate.

From the Mueller report to the recent revelations regarding the President’s dealing with Ukraine and its President, evidence indicates that the President is not only willing to take actions which, in my judgment, amount to an abuse of power—in fact, I think the behavior of the President on the phone call with the Ukrainian President was a textbook case of abuse of power. Apparently, he wants to enlist others to defend the indefensible—this behavior—and has said other things that are troubling to so many Americans.

I think it is important to provide some historical perspective on impeachment, and I will seek to do some of that today. This is by no means a full review of the history, but I think it is important to talk about some of the questions our Founders were wrestling with.

Our Founders grappled with many different questions as they debated the

Constitution itself, particularly the nature and the power of the Office of the President of the United States. As our Founders debated how to hold the President accountable during the 1787 Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia, Elbridge Gerry said as follows regarding the issue of impeachment: “A good magistrate will not fear [impeachments]. A bad one ought to be kept in fear of them.”

Consistent with Gerry’s remarks, our Constitution provides an impeachment process for “Treason, Bribery, or other high Crimes and Misdemeanors.” At the time of the drafting, our Founders’ understanding of “high Crimes and Misdemeanors” was informed by centuries of English legal precedent.

We know, as Alexander Hamilton explained in Federalist No. 65, impeachment should stem from “abuse or violation of some public trust.” I will say it again: “abuse or violation of some public trust.” Informed by this history, Congress has consistently interpreted the phrase broadly to mean “serious violations of the public trust”—that was one understanding—and has explained that “the phrase refers to misconduct that damages the state and the operations of governmental institutions, and is not limited to criminal misconduct.” That is an important distinction—“not limited to criminal misconduct.”

There is no requirement for a President to engage in a quid pro quo. Any kind of quid pro quo arrangement is not required for impeachment, although it is certainly an impeachable offense to engage in that kind of conduct. Rather, our Constitution merely requires “abuse or violation of some public trust,” as Hamilton spoke to.

Since Special Counsel Mueller issued his report on Russian interference in the 2016 election and, more recently, as testimony has emerged about President Trump’s conduct toward Ukraine, I have attempted to assess how President Trump’s actions fit in our historical and current understanding of what “high Crimes and Misdemeanors” means.

This is an undertaking that must be done in a considered manner and after reviewing all of the relevant information that is available. But I am increasingly convinced that Speaker PELOSI was correct in calling for a formal impeachment inquiry into President Trump’s conduct. A failure by Congress to pursue impeachment in the face of grave offenses by the President would be insulting to our Constitution and insulting to our values.

Let’s talk about the Ukraine example for a moment. Over the past several weeks, our Nation has been confronted by credible and detailed press reports, as well as exhaustive testimony, in some cases lasting 8 hours, 9 hours, 10 hours at a time, just for one witness, and this testimony has come from both career diplomats and State Department officials indicating that the