

President has been employing his personal attorney to manage a shadow diplomacy agenda focused on personal vendettas and unfounded conspiracy theories in Ukraine.

In a telephone call with President Zelensky of Ukraine, President Trump—immediately after the Ukrainian President raised the issue of purchasing Javelins to defend his country from Russian aggression—asked the Ukrainian President to “do us a favor though” by working with his lawyer, Rudy Giuliani, and launching an investigation into a discredited conspiracy theory regarding a DNC server in Ukraine. To say that theory is discredited is an understatement. It has been debunked, so said a former Homeland Security Advisor to President Trump, among others.

President Trump also asked President Zelensky “to look into” Joe Biden’s son and explained that “a lot of people want to find out” about Biden—a political rival who, of course, is running for President.

After a memorandum of the phone call was released to the public, the House Intelligence Committee released a text message from the top U.S. diplomat in Ukraine, who indicated that he thought it was “crazy [for the President] to withhold security assistance for help with a political campaign.”

Other officials have since come forward, some even resigning because of their serious concerns over the White House’s handling of Ukraine policy. Michael McKinley, a former senior adviser to the U.S. Secretary of State, testified that he resigned for two reasons: “the failure, in my view, of the State Department to offer support to Foreign Service employees caught up in the impeachment inquiry on Ukraine, and, second, by what appears to be the utilization of our ambassadors overseas to advance a domestic political objective.” That is what Mr. McKinley, who just left the State Department, said.

Our Founders had the foresight to ensure that the power of the President was not unlimited and that Congress could, if necessary, hold the Executive accountable for abuses of power through the impeachment process. Surely, not every instance of Presidential wrongdoing merits impeachment. Using the vast powers of impeachment in a cavalier fashion would be an insult to our Constitution.

This inquiry is not simply about President Trump’s abuse of power. This inquiry is about our democracy and the values that the Founders agreed should guide our Nation.

Impeachment is not what anyone in this town would prefer. It is what our Constitution demands—demands—when an Executive abuses his or her power in a manner that “damages the state and the operations of government institutions.” That is from an earlier impeachment in the 1860s.

As Hamilton said so long ago—but so prescient—when there is an “abuse or

violation of some public trust,” we are summoned—summoned—by our constitutional duty to act.

To fail to act would be a dereliction of that duty, thereby inviting this executive and future executives to abuse that public trust with impunity. We should never do that.

H.R. 3055

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, very briefly, I wanted to highlight a story that was in today’s Wall Street Journal, entitled “As Court Case Imperils Affordable Care Act, Some States Prepare Contingency Plans.” That is the headline. The subheadline is this: “Lawmakers explore ways to preserve coverage, benefits if the health law is struck down.”

This is the opening paragraph that I will read—it is not very long, but I want to read it—from the story today:

A federal appeals court decision that could strike down the Affordable Care Act as soon as this month has rattled officials in several states who are pursuing legislation to preserve some coverage in the absence of any Trump administration contingency plan.

Lawmakers in states including Louisiana, Nevada, New Mexico and California have passed bills or are reviewing action aimed at dealing with the fallout if the ACA is overturned.

That is from the very beginning of the article. I will not go further, other than to say that this is a grave matter. If a Federal appeals court were to rule in favor of the moving party on appeal—or I should say the moving party at the beginning of the suit—and affirm the district court, what would happen if that were the case? The patient protection in the Affordable Care Act would be wiped out, and it would cause not just chaos but would take away protections from people like those who have protections for a pre-existing condition and would also take healthcare coverage away from millions, if not tens of millions.

This is a critically important matter, and it deserves and warrants the attention of Members of the Senate and the House as well.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to my colleagues on the Senate floor this evening.

I really come to talk about something that shouldn’t be momentous, shouldn’t be unusual, and should be routine around here. Unfortunately, as you and I have experienced, it is not routine. What is not routine is the U.S. Senate, the U.S. Congress getting its job done. Part of that job is the appropriations process, and it ought to be something we do every year on a routine basis.

Every city council, every county commission, and every school board in the State of Kansas every year passes a budget and determines the spending for that school board or that city council

or for that county commission. Yet, when we come to Washington, DC, over the years, it has become problematic and it has become difficult for us to do one of the basic things of a functioning government: to determine the amount of money to be spent, in broad terms, and then to fill in the spaces with what we should do for individual Agencies and Departments within that budget agreement.

We are poised for a vote tomorrow, a motion on cloture. What that means to folks in Kansas is this: Should we begin the process of debating, amending, and passing appropriations bills? I am here to urge my colleagues, both Republicans and Democrats, to vote yes on cloture, to bring us to the point in which we can have the debate.

I wouldn’t have thought when I came to the U.S. Senate that one of my primary tasks, at least as I saw it, would be to try to help this place function and have an appropriations process that is thoughtful, that establishes priorities, that allows every Member of the Senate to have input. That is something we ought to be able to accomplish without a lot of work, and I hope that we demonstrate that we can do that in the vote tomorrow.

The appropriations process has involved an Appropriations Committee of which you, Mr. President, and I serve on. Many of the bills have been considered and voted on. There will be four bills as a package in this motion to invoke cloture that will be presented to the full Senate tomorrow.

For the subcommittee that I chair—Commerce, Justice, Science—that appropriations bill will be a part of that cloture package. Agriculture, something hugely important to my constituents in Kansas and across the country, Interior, Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development—those four bills have passed unanimously out of the Senate Appropriations Committee in September. Every Republican on the committee and every Democrat on the committee voted in favor of them.

I know in my own circumstances, on the Commerce, Justice, Science bill, I worked closely—perhaps a better way to say it is that the ranking member of our subcommittee, the Senator from New Hampshire, Mrs. SHAHEEN, and I worked closely together—to try to find a path by which we could avoid those issues that would prevent us from finding an agreement that allowed our bill to move forward. I am pretty certain that occurred in the other three subcommittees.

Presented tomorrow is an opportunity for the Senate to take up 4 appropriations bills—4 out of 12—and those 4 are ones that were unanimously agreed to by the Appropriations Committee. I commend Chairman SHELBY and Vice Chairman LEAHY for their efforts in the full committee to bring us together to get us in a position where we have those four bills now, soon, I hope, to be pending in front of the Senate.

Why does this matter? There is a lot of work that has gone into trying to determine what those appropriations bills should say and should contain. Certainly, how much money we spend is important, but if you sidetrack the appropriations process, you eliminate the prioritization. We need to make decisions every year on behalf of the American people. Is there something that we should spend no money on? Last year it received money but not this year. It is not enough priority for us to spend enough money on this year. Are there things we are spending money on today, this year, that are about right, and are there a few things we should spend more money on?

That is a process that involves hearings. It involves witnesses. It involves testimony. It involves other Members, the U.S. Senators, and 100 of us have the opportunity to provide input as to how much money should be spent in those various areas of the appropriations bill. Are there things that are higher priorities, programs that work better than others?

We ought to care about this from a fiscal point of view—how much money we spend. Are we on a path to get us toward greater fiscal sanity, getting our books to balance? But at the same time, in the process of doing that, are we making decisions that determine that something is more important than something else because we know we shouldn't and can't spend money on everything?

That is what the appropriations process does. Maybe we didn't get it exactly right, but allowing the bills to come to the Senate floor allows 99 of my colleagues to join me in the ability to offer amendments to change those priorities. So every Member of the Senate, on behalf of their constituents back home in their home States, ought to care about an appropriations bill being on the Senate floor.

Perhaps, this is the point when I should say that if we fail to do this, what this normally will mean is that we have what we call a CR, or a continuing resolution, meaning that we are going to fund the Federal Government next year at the same levels and in the same way as we did this year.

That lacks any kind of common sense or a basis for making a good decision. Not everything is equal. Just because we spent something last year in this amount doesn't mean it is the right amount next year. If we have been doing continuing resolutions one year after another, what that means is decisions we made about spending 3 or 4 years ago remain the priorities for next year's spending.

We ought to avoid the continuing resolution. We ought to do our work. Tomorrow's vote puts us on a path to do that. Again, we are only on that path if the Members of the Senate decide that this is something we are going to proceed to accomplish.

Fiscal order, prioritization of spending—I also think that Congress over

the years has deferred too often to Federal Agencies and Departments. I tell my constituents that I know the American people are not satisfied with the nature of Congress as an institution and perhaps not satisfied with even their own Senator or U.S. Congressman or Congresswoman, but we are the closest thing that you have to the ability to make your will known and cause and effect in Washington, DC.

Someone can visit with me and someone can visit with every U.S. Senator and have a consequence here. It is through this process, if you allow us all to participate in the legislative process, that we can take our constituents' will and bring it to Washington, DC, on their behalf.

In the absence of that, it just means the Departments, the Cabinets, the Cabinet Secretaries, the Agency heads, the Bureau chiefs, and the people who work within the bureaucracy have more say if we don't do appropriations bills than elected officials representing Kansans and the people of 49 other States.

This is a way we can bring the people of the United States into decisions made in Washington, DC. When we defer, when we do a continuing resolution, it means it is more likely that no person within the bureaucracy has any reason to pay any attention to our interests. A constituent brings me a problem and says: Something is going on at the Department of Interior, and this is what we are seeing, and this is how it affects us. Could you help solve that problem? Can you get somebody's attention at the Department of Interior? Could you get somebody's attention at the Department of Commerce?

If we don't do appropriations bills, our ability to influence people at the Department of Commerce—the power of the purse strings—disappears. It means that we have less ability not only to determine how money is to be spent but to be able to tell an Agency head or a Cabinet Secretary: This makes no sense. What you are doing to folks back home is very damaging to them. Let us explain to you.

If human nature, being what it is, says that if you are the person or if you are the organization—in this case, the U.S. Senate—that determines how much money an Agency, Department, or Cabinet Secretary gets within their realm of authority, you are going to be much more likely to listen to a Member of Congress and help us solve problems on behalf of our constituents.

The appropriations process matters greatly. I think we are poised for the opportunity to demonstrate that this place can work, it can represent the American people, and we can allow all of our colleagues to have input in the appropriations process, which has been ongoing since last year.

I hope the conclusion tomorrow by my colleagues is that this is a worthy endeavor. The U.S. Senate ought to return to the days in which we did 12 appropriations bills on an annual basis

and allowed the American people their input in the appropriations process.

PROTOCOL TO THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY OF 1949 ON THE ACCESSION OF NORTH MACEDONIA

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I come to the floor to express my support for ratifying the Protocol to the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949 on the Accession of North Macedonia. In light of the Kremlin's ongoing aggression against the United States, against Ukraine, and against many of our democratic allies, today's vote sends an important signal that we are serious about standing up to Moscow. A strong NATO is critical to the security of the United States, and supporting NATO's expansion is one of the most important things this body can do to protect our Nation.

This historic vote would not be happening without the Prespa Agreement between Greece and North Macedonia, which resolved the two countries' name dispute and came into force in February. I want to acknowledge the hard work of these countries, as well as the tireless efforts of American diplomats, to make Prespa a reality.

North Macedonia has already made notable contributions to the security of the U.S. and of NATO. North Macedonia has deployed more than 4,000 troops to Iraq in support of U.S. efforts there, and in 2018, North Macedonia boosted its contribution to Afghanistan by 20 percent.

It actively supports the international counter-ISIS coalition and has also supported missions in Kosovo. This history of partnership with the U.S. on important security issues speaks strongly in favor of North Macedonia's inclusion in the Alliance.

NATO is strongest when all of its members contribute, and I am glad that North Macedonia is committed to hitting the target of spending 2 percent of its GDP on defense by 2024. The government has already made great progress towards that target, and we must hold them to that promise.

I also want to stress the importance of all NATO members spending 2 percent of GDP on defense. Our allies have increased their defense spending since 2014 in response to a clear and growing threat from the Kremlin. We must work to make sure that trend continues, and we must do it as partners, not as bullies.

We must also remember that belonging to NATO is about more than military capabilities. NATO was established as a club of democracies that abide by a certain set of principles. When the Clinton administration was considering new members, former Secretary of Defense William Perry laid out some criteria for inclusion in this group: individual liberty for citizens, democratic elections, the rule of law, economic and market-based reforms, resolution of territorial disputes with neighbors, and civilian control of the military.