

## EXECUTIVE SESSION

## EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Chad F. Wolf, of Virginia, to be Under Secretary for Strategy, Policy, and Plans, Department of Homeland Security. (New Position)

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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

## IMMIGRATION

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, today, the Supreme Court heard oral arguments in the case against the President's decision to cancel DACA, the program that grants legal status to over 600,000 Dreamers who were brought to this country through no fault of their own, who voluntarily came forward and registered with the government in exchange for protected status, who work in our factories and our hospitals, who teach and learn in our schools and serve in our military. Before the highest Court in the land, President Trump and his administration cruelly argued that these Dreamers do not belong in America and must be ripped away from their families and sent back to countries that many of them do not even remember.

The President once tweeted: "Does anybody really want to throw out good, educated and accomplished young people who have jobs, some serving in the military? Really!" Now the same President is saying some Dreamers are "very tough, hardened criminals," and his administration has argued they should be deported. Donald Trump's hypocrisy when it comes to Dreamers knows no bounds. After flip-flopping again and again on the issue and after failing to lead an effort to pass comprehensive immigration reform, it is abjectly shameful that President Trump is trying to get the Supreme Court to do his dirty work and put the Dreamers under threat of mass deportation.

When the DACA Program was established in 2012, under a long tradition of administrative discretion, it changed the lives of thousands and thousands of Dreamers for the better, and it made our country better. Yet, because of President Trump and his relentless scapegoating of immigrants—his cynical use of trying to tell too many of

the American people that the Dreamers are the reason they are not doing well, which is despicable—these hard-working and patriotic Americans are haunted by the possibility they could be forced to leave this country at any moment—be pulled away from their families, their jobs, their homes. It is cruel. It is counterproductive. It undermines American values and all that America stands for.

Thankfully, one of the first things the House Democrats did when they won the majority was to pass a permanent legislative solution for DACA recipients and TPS holders. It is legislation I wholeheartedly support. Now it is up to the Supreme Court to defend the program. It is up to Majority Leader McConnell to bring the Dream and Promise Act to the Senate floor.

My good friend Senator DURBIN, who has been a champion for Dreamers for as long as I can remember, will ask for the Senate's consent this evening to take up these bills. I thank him for his moral and continued strong leadership on this issue. I could not agree more with what he is trying to do. It is time to do the right thing for Dreamers and enshrine DACA into law.

We will see how my Republican friends respond. After all, the House has done its job. Where are the Senate Republicans who claim to stand with the Dreamers? We will see this evening.

From my home in Brooklyn, I can see the great lady in the harbor who welcomed my ancestors many years ago. If America is to remain the greatest Nation in the world and a beacon of hope and freedom for people everywhere—a light among nations—we must live up to our best values. That means we must stand totally and wholeheartedly with the Dreamers and all 11 million who now live in the shadows.

## NOMINATIONS

Madam President, on nominations, we are here at the beginning of another week in the Senate. As is the norm under Leader McConnell, we will not be debating legislation like the Dream Act in order to improve the lives of average Americans. Instead, we will vote on another slate of controversial Trump administration nominees.

First up is the nomination of Chad Wolf to serve as an Under Secretary at the Department of Homeland Security. Mr. Wolf has had leadership roles within the DHS through much of Trump's Presidency and has troubling ties to President Trump's disastrous family separation policy, the Muslim ban, and the national emergency declaration at the southern border. Despite testifying that he was not involved in the family separation policy, Mr. Wolf reportedly suggested the policy in a memo he sent to then-Attorney General Sessions. He is ashamed to admit it. He knows it was wrong, but he did it anyway. This man does not deserve to be an Under Secretary at DHS.

The circumstances of Mr. Wolf's nomination are also very strange. Wolf

is not only already serving as an Under Secretary in an acting capacity, but President Trump has named him as the incoming Secretary of DHS in an acting capacity. President Trump never bothered to nominate a replacement for departing DHS Secretary McAleenan, who left yesterday. Yet the Senate is being asked to confirm someone to a job he is not even going to perform. Indeed, if Mr. Wolf is confirmed, we may never vote on who will be the actual Secretary of DHS, which is a major Cabinet-level department.

This is completely unacceptable. The administration is having trouble finding people to fill these jobs. They know the cruelty they will be asked to enforce, and they know that Donald Trump will treat them poorly. So he can't find anybody to take these positions. Hence, we have this awkward game of musical chairs. Rather than working with Congress to find a DHS Secretary whom we could support, the Trump administration is trying a legal end-around that subverts our constitutional duty to advise and consent.

Regardless of your ideology or views on immigration, my fellow Senators should oppose Wolf's nomination on constitutional grounds.

After the Senate considers Mr. Wolf, we will consider the nomination of Steven Menashi to serve on the Second Circuit Court of Appeals.

I have rarely met a nominee as low as Mr. Menashi. He has a troubling record on race, women's equality, LGBTQ rights, and the rights of immigrants. His conduct before the Committee on the Judiciary was insulting, and recent reports describe how, during his tenure while working at the Department of Education, he played a leading role in designing an illegal effort to deny debt relief to thousands of students who had been swindled by for-profit colleges. That is right. The Senate is going to be asked to confirm someone, Mr. Menashi, to be a judge who designed an illegal scheme to deny debt relief so as to defraud students. The man has no principles. The man has no conscience. The man has no morals. He should not be on the bench.

## AGENT ORANGE

Madam President, finally, about our veterans and Agent Orange, yesterday, our Nation observed Veterans Day. It was a chance for all of us to say thank you to the millions of brave Americans who have served our country. It was a day not only to celebrate their achievements and express a deep and abiding gratitude for their service but also to recognize that for many veterans, sacrifices have come as a result of military service and that those sacrifices are not yet over. I want to shed light on one particular issue today.

There are now hundreds of thousands of veterans who suffer from diseases that have been linked to Agent Orange, which is a chemical that was used by our military during the Vietnam war. One's exposure to Agent Orange can lead to a host of complications—diabetes, leukemia, and more. The VA has

long provided benefits to veterans who suffer from these conditions. It has provided healthcare and compensation so as to help to defer the hardships veterans have faced from the wounds from which they still suffer after having been on the battlefield.

In response to more recent studies, in 2017, VA Secretary Shulkin decided to add bladder cancer, hypertension, Parkinson's-like symptoms, and hypothyroidism to the list of Agent Orange-related conditions that are eligible for benefits, which would have improved the lives of 83,000 vets. Shockingly, once again, within this cruel administration—it doesn't even care about our veterans—it was reported that OMB Director and White House Chief of Staff Mulvaney has decided to block benefits for these new conditions because he is worried about the cost. It is disgraceful.

Let me repeat.

Despite the recommendation of President Trump's VA Secretary and the recommendation of the National Academy of Medicine, Mulvaney has decided to block health benefits to sick veterans. Many of these veterans are retired, and many don't have a steady income. These benefits could make the difference between life and death, but Mick Mulvaney—the same Mick Mulvaney who thought \$1.5 trillion was an acceptable cost to give billionaires and corporations in a giant tax cut, which created a huge deficit—now believes that the cost of helping 83,000 sick veterans is just too high.

This is incomprehensibly cruel. When are the American people going to wake up and see what the Trump administration is doing? He gives tax breaks to billionaires but no benefits to veterans who are suffering from the result of Agent Orange exposure?

My home State of New York has 240,000 veterans from the Vietnam era. Many of them were exposed to Agent Orange without realizing it. Just yesterday, the Buffalo News profiled the life of Vietnam veteran Dick Gabel, who was drafted into the Army at age 19. In his approximately 2 years of service, he was shot in the leg. He recovered and was sent back to the war. He lost many of his closest friends along the way. After he came home, for decades, Dick worked with kids in his hometown to make Veterans Day an annual highlight, and he brought together hundreds of veterans to volunteer at local schools. Just last year, he was diagnosed with leukemia, possibly because of his exposure to Agent Orange.

There are likely thousands of veterans in New York who are like Dick—fighting illnesses that are directly linked to Agent Orange and their military service in Vietnam. Yet, because they got the wrong disease, the Trump administration is blocking their health benefits.

So today—a day after millions of Americans, myself included, marched in the parades across our country to

honor our vets—I demand that Chief of Staff Mulvaney reverse this cruel and unfair decision immediately.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

#### TURKEY AND SYRIA

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Madam President, I start by thanking the Democratic leader for his leadership in raising those important issues before the Senate this afternoon.

I bring another issue before the Senate, that being my strong opposition to President Trump's shameful decision to invite Turkish President Erdogan to the White House tomorrow. It is a decision that has alarmed our allies and comforted our adversaries. It is a decision that undermines our values and our national security interests, and it is a decision that sends a terrible message to the world about how to get invited to President Trump's White House.

In just the last 5 weeks, Turkish President Erdogan has taken the following actions: No. 1, he has launched an attack on a key ally of ours—in fact, the key ally—in our fight against ISIS terrorists, that being the Syrian Democratic Forces, led by the Syrian Kurds. No. 2, President Erdogan and his forces have killed over 200 in these attacks, displaced over 300,000, and enabled the release of over 100 ISIS prisoners. No. 3, Erdogan is using jihadi proxies that include a lot of al-Qaida elements, and they are committing gross human rights abuses, including what the Trump administration has acknowledged as being war crimes. There are also reports that the Turkish-backed proxy forces are using the chemical agent white phosphorus. No. 4, Erdogan and his forces have violated the so-called safe zone agreement that was reached by Vice President PENCE in Ankara a few weeks ago. After President Erdogan entered into that agreement with Vice President PENCE, which has been violated, he turned around and decided to cut a separate deal with Putin and Russia, thereby giving Russia even more leverage than it already had in Syria.

In addition, Erdogan boasted that he organized a hit squad to assassinate the top commander of our Syrian Kurdish allies, General Mazloum. President Erdogan did that even after President Trump acknowledged that our Syrian Kurdish allies had given us important information that had helped us to kill ISIS leader Baghdadi. In fact, Erdogan has compared the military leader of our Syrian Kurdish allies—those who bore the brunt of the fight against ISIS—with the ISIS leader whom we just killed, Baghdadi. President Erdogan did all of that in just the last 5 weeks.

What did President Trump do?

Instead of calling upon the House and the Senate to pass the economic sanctions bill that had been introduced, he rewarded Erdogan for all of those actions with a coveted White House meeting.

That is not the way we should be treating somebody who has just spent the last 5 weeks thumbing his nose at the United States, undermining our interests, endangering our allies, strengthening Russia, Assad, and Iran, and increasing threats to our ally Israel.

It sends a terrible message to the world: Go ahead and undermine the national security interests of the United States, and the President of the United States will invite you over for dinner.

I have teamed up with Senator GRAHAM and others on a bipartisan basis, and I want to thank the Presiding Officer for her support on that sanctions legislation to hold Turkey accountable.

Here is what Senator GRAHAM said about President Erdogan just 3 weeks ago: "If you want to get Erdogan's attention, you have to treat him like the thug he is." That is Senator GRAHAM speaking. Yet Erdogan, time and again over the last 5 weeks and before, has essentially spit in the eye of the United States, and now he is coming to Washington for a White House meeting. This is very difficult to explain. I am not sure any of us has the answer as to why President Trump is doing this.

The Washington Post had an article on October 17 headlined "In Turkey's President, Trump seems to have found a soul mate." If you read through the article, you can see that President Trump does seem to have an affinity for President Erdogan of Turkey, and clearly President Erdogan likes to get on the phone with President Trump because whenever he does, President Erdogan seems to get his way.

Now he will come for a face-to-face meeting, and I am sure President Erdogan expects to get his way again. Why would he think that? Well, because the last time they talked, President Erdogan clearly took away from the conversation that it was just fine with President Trump if Turkey attacked our Syrian Kurdish allies. President Erdogan clearly believed he had the green light. In fact, after they hung up from that phone call, President Erdogan sent his forces and used proxy forces to attack our Syrian Kurdish allies, and President Trump tweeted that we were withdrawing some of our Special Forces from the area—Special Forces that had helped deter Turkish aggression against our Syrian Kurdish allies.

It is very rare for retired senior military leaders in the United States to criticize a sitting Commander in Chief, but the betrayal of our Syrian Kurdish allies and the terrible message that sent around the world about the unreliability of the United States compelled many of those former leaders to warn about the consequences. I think it is important for the Senate to hear some comments from people who are respected for what they have done for our country.

ADM William McRaven, former commander of the U.S. Special Operations Command, who worked with our Syrian