

Defense appropriations bill. Now we have a short-term continuing resolution that expires this November 21. I am told or have read that there is likely to be a follow-on continuing resolution that takes us up to December 20, but that is important work, too, because none of us wants to see another government shutdown. No one wins with government shutdowns.

This sort of gamesmanship that occurs by blocking bills that should have support by overwhelming bipartisan numbers in the Senate is important, too—things like paying the military, making sure that it maintains its readiness to fight and win the Nation's wars, and even more importantly, making sure it keeps the peace.

I know the majority leader has a challenge in trying to figure out how to schedule legislation on the Senate floor, but it certainly doesn't help when our Democratic colleagues repeatedly object to things like appropriations bills and put us into this dysfunction when it comes to paying the Federal Government's bills.

I would say to my friend from New York that I am always happy to work with him and with any other Member in the Senate, no matter what one's political party is and no matter what one's ideological persuasion is, because I actually believe we were sent here to solve problems and to get things done.

What I dislike and what I am disappointed about is the dysfunction that we see in the U.S. Senate, whereby, even though it is less than a year before the election, politics have overwhelmed our ability to get things done. I came to the floor to say that maybe we can't do all of this right now, today, but we can do this, and let's build on it once we have gotten the bill passed.

I am disappointed that the Democratic leader has seen fit to object to passing this bill that he himself called good and well-intended and that is supported by organizations like the American Association of Retired Persons. I do not understand it, but maybe somebody else does. Their saying that we can't do something because it doesn't include everything we want to do here, right now, is disappointing to me, and I don't think it is what the American people sent us here to do.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader.

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

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

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I thank my colleague for the interchange, and it will continue. We Democrats will not rest until we get votes, simple votes—not bring the house down—on issues of great consequence with regard to drug prices and the American people while the other side blocks them.

IMPEACHMENT

Mr. President, as we speak, the House Intelligence Committee is con-

ducting the first day of public hearings in its impeachment inquiry into President Trump.

The list of witnesses this week includes several key figures with knowledge of the events in question. While most of the witness requests from House Republicans were non sequiturs, or individuals who would have no knowledge of the President's actions nor of the allegations against him, three of the individuals requested by the Republicans were agreed to and are slated to testify next week. The idea that the Republicans and the President have no due process and can't call witnesses or influence the process is simply inaccurate.

As the impeachment inquiry in the House begins a new phase today in its pursuit of the facts, we have a serious responsibility here in the Senate not to prejudice the case but to examine the evidence impartially. We have a responsibility to let all of the facts come out and, as they do, to keep an open mind and let ourselves be ruled by reason rather than by passion or partisanship. As public hearings in the House begin, we would do well to remember our constitutional duty to act as judges and jurors in a potential trial when and if it comes to one. That is not to say we won't even read the transcript, and that is not to say the vote would come out this way. Yet, as jurors, we will be as dispassioned as each of us can be.

TURKEY AND SYRIA

Mr. President, on another matter, President Trump will roll out the red carpet today for President Erdogan, of Turkey, as he visits the White House after everything that has transpired over the last few months. This is after President Trump green-lit Turkey's reckless and destabilizing invasion of northern Syria, after Turkish troops and their proxies committed atrocities against civilians and the Syrian Kurds, who are our former partners in the fight against ISIS, and after Erdogan cut a deal with our adversary President Putin and threatened our allies in Europe with the release of ISIS's detainees.

The fact that President Trump will reward President Erdogan with an Oval Office meeting today is mind-boggling. The meeting will serve as a very public example of how President Trump has mismanaged the situation in Syria and, most importantly, how he has complicated and slowed the effort to secure the enduring defeat of ISIS. It is ISIS that creates the greatest danger to our American homeland. As al-Qaida did before it, it will try to create huge damage. We in New York know that this can sometimes, unfortunately, occur. God forbid it happens again.

Yet, holy mackerel, the President has no plan for ISIS; detainees are escaping; and the Turks are far more upset with the Kurds, who have been on our side with ISIS, than they are with ISIS. Erdogan suppresses free speech, arrests opponents, and does so many

other terrible things to his country, which was once a much more shining example of democracy—and the President invites him here? Does the President have no sense of value? Does the President have no sense of morals? Does the President have no sense of what affects American security? It is appalling.

AGRICULTURE

Mr. President, on agriculture, a report issued yesterday by the Democratic minority on the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry shed new light on troubling disparities as to how the Trump administration has treated farmers through the Department of Agriculture's Market Facilitation Program.

Farmers in need of Federal aid have leaned on this program to offset losses that have been caused by retaliatory foreign tariffs. In an industry in which margins are sometimes very thin, this support makes a real difference for struggling farmers across the country. Yet, rather than helping those farmers who are the most in need, the Trump administration, through this program, is picking winners and losers by using a flawed methodology to favor certain regions over others and wealthy agricultural conglomerates over small farmers.

The whole idea of the program is to help small farmers throughout the Middle West, particularly those farmers with soybeans and corn and hogs. The bulk of the program went to five Southern States. Ninety-five percent of the top payments defined as \$100 or more per acre all went to counties in Southern States. Where did the lowest payments go? They went to the counties in the Midwest even though the Midwest has suffered greater losses overall.

Instead of coming up with a strategy to help smaller and less established farms, which are often more vulnerable during tough economic times, the Trump administration has doubled the payment caps for row crops while having left other caps in place. This will disproportionately funnel money to the largest farms in America while it will limit aid to smaller farms.

Most concerning, however, is that our study shows the Trump administration has awarded tens of millions in purchase contracts to foreign-owned companies, including a large beef factory in Brazil. Instead of ensuring that aid goes to American farmers, the Trump administration has been handing millions of taxpayer dollars to foreign agribusinesses.

This program was put together on the spur because the President was worried about political effects with, particularly, soybean farmers but with others, too, in the Middle West. Yet it was put together so poorly—in such a slipshod and unthought-out manner—that cotton farmers do the best of all even though their prices are not hurting the way soybean or corn or hog prices are.

To my friends on the other side of the aisle, the fiscal conservatives, we need your voices.

If this program were going to the urban areas or maybe to the poorer people, we would hear an outcry from certain Members on the other side, but our farmers need the help too. When you waste money on an ag program, the people who are hurt the most are our smaller and family farmers, particularly, in this case, in the Middle West.

For years, my Republican friends in this Chamber accused the Obama administration—unfairly, in my mind—of picking winners and losers in the market. It was one of their favorite talking points. Here, we have the Trump administration literally picking winners and losers among American farmers. Sometimes the winners are not even American. Oftentimes, the losers are the small family farmers who need assistance the most.

I am so glad that my Democrat colleagues on the Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee, especially Ranking Member STABENOW, have worked to inject some transparency into the agriculture relief program.

The Trump administration should be using the Market Facilitation Program to help those farmers most in need—period. The Trump administration needs to stop picking winners and losers and make sure all American farmers get the help they deserve.

VETERANS

Mr. President, finally, on veterans—this is another one—when I look at what this administration is doing, and if every American knew all these things, Donald Trump wouldn't stand a chance. This one, I hope, will get out.

I talked a little bit about this yesterday. We all know that so many of our young men and women—my generation—went to Vietnam and risked their lives. Many of them gave their lives for our country. One of the worst aspects of things is that they were not treated as heroes when they came home.

I think America has made up for that now, but here is a way that we are not treating them well at all. Many of them were exposed to Agent Orange, and it became clear that many got sick from exposure to Agent Orange while fighting in Vietnam.

Well, what the VA has found is that certain illnesses are caused by exposure to Agent Orange, and they found that there are four more illnesses that have an Agent Orange link. But quietly and secretly, the Trump administration denied payments to over 60,000 veterans who had these illnesses and who received emergency care at non-VA facilities in 2017.

It has missed deadlines to expand the VA caregivers program to Vietnam and Korean war veterans, and there are some reports that the Trump VA hired doctors on probation, but what is galling at the moment is this Agent Orange situation and hiding the report.

Mulvaney, evidently, the Chief of Staff, just said quietly: We are not

funding it. It took a Freedom of Information Act action to reveal that they were cutting the money off for these folks.

They went to Vietnam. Some of them volunteered. Some of them were drafted. They got sick because of exposure to Agent Orange, and the Trump administration, which loves to have rallies with veterans, cuts the money off from them, saying that Mulvaney said we couldn't afford it.

These veterans could afford to risk their lives for us. We can afford to help them in their hour of need. I hope the administration will reverse its decision.

I yield the floor.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:48 p.m., recessed until 2 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. PERDUE).

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I have the right to yield to Senator COLLINS at the end of my remarks.

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

PRESCRIPTION DRUG PRICING REDUCTION ACT

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, polls show a surprising interest of Americans in the high cost of prescription drugs. It seems to be an issue that unites Americans. I often point out that Washington is an island surrounded by reality. Here inside the Beltway, people are obsessed with partisan impeachment proceedings. It seems like morning, noon, and night, the relentless effort to unseat the President of the United States is a toxic strain of Potomac fever infecting Capitol Hill.

Now, if only Congress would channel every waking minute to fix problems in the real world, wouldn't that be wonderful? So let me provide a reality check. For people living in the real world, impeachment inquiry is not what wakes up moms and dads worried sick about paying for their child's insulin. It is not what drains the pocketbooks of seniors and takes a big bite out of people's paychecks. The issue that unites Americans from Maine, to Iowa, to Oregon is the sky-high prices that Americans and the taxpaying public are paying for prescription medicine.

As chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, I am working in a bipartisan way to fix what is broken in our drug supply chain. In February, we called the heads of Big Pharma to testify before the Finance Committee.

Next, we heard from the largest pharmacy benefit managers to examine rebates and unravel the pricing supply chain. There was an awful lot of finger-pointing between the various interests about the soaring drug prices that Americans pay for pharmaceuticals. That finger-pointing, we heard in our committee. Finger-pointing doesn't decrease drug prices because the real problem is there is too much secrecy and not enough accountability in the industry of pricing drugs.

When drug prices grow by leaps and bounds, year after year, it is time to look under the hood. It is time to kick the tires along the drug supply chain and check the gauge on the competition. Why in the world is insulin, just as an example—a drug that has been on the market for nearly 100 years—doubling or tripling in price for patients in the United States? It is surely not that way in Europe.

We have gotten lots of feedback from patient advocates, healthcare providers, and free market proponents. The pushback from Big Pharma reveals that we are really on to something. Congress needs to take its foot off the brake. It is time to deliver real savings, and our bill will deliver real savings to consumers and to the taxpayers. It is time to pass reforms that will cut prescription drug costs for the American people.

Now, some of my colleagues may require a more blunt call to action so I want to use the two-by-four illustration. Join us and score a win for the American people. Otherwise, do nothing and risk being on the losing side of the ballot box next November.

At my annual 99 county meetings where I always hold a Q&A with whatever groups of constituents gather, I hear the same message from people all across the State of Iowa. They have family members and they have neighbors who struggle to pay for prescription management, to manage chronic health conditions, and to treat diseases. Thanks to breakthrough treatments and cures, Americans are living longer and healthier lives.

Many are beating the odds of a diagnosis that would have been a death sentence a generation ago. However, if a loved one is diagnosed with MS or diabetes or cystic fibrosis, no miracle cure will help if Americans can't afford to pay for their medicine. It will not help seniors if sky-high prices drain taxpayer-financed health programs like Medicare and Medicaid. Soaring drug prices are forcing too many Americans to skimp on other necessities or even ration their doses of prescriptions that they take.

Now, I just mentioned, as an example, cystic fibrosis. Last month, the FDA approved a promising new treatment for this progressive genetic disorder. Cystic fibrosis impacts about 30,000 Americans. There is nothing parents will not do to advocate for their child living with this condition. That is how I met one family from Iowa a few