

Alas, our Democratic colleagues have not been willing to budge on any of those things. As a result, while the Senate waits for the House to send us short-term funding legislation, we will spend our time on the personnel business.

Yesterday, we advanced the nomination of Justice Robert Luck, of Florida, to be a U.S. circuit judge for the Eleventh Circuit, with the support of a bipartisan majority.

Justice Luck brings an impressive and well-rounded legal record, including a clerkship on the Eleventh Circuit, service in the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Florida, and years spent ruling from the State bench.

Today, we will also advance the nomination of Justice Barbara Lagoa, of Florida, also to serve on the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals. A graduate of Columbia University School of Law, Justice Lagoa has spent years practicing law, serving as a Federal prosecutor, and ruling from both the State appellate bench and the Florida Supreme Court.

I look forward to confirming both of these impressive nominees, along with Adrian Zuckerman, the President's nominee to serve as our Nation's Ambassador to Romania.

THE MIDDLE EAST

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, on a final matter, I spoke yesterday about the courageous people of Hong Kong who are standing up to Beijing and speaking up for their freedoms. But Hongkongers are not alone in bravely speaking up at this time. The Middle East continues to be swept by widespread and cross-sectarian demonstrations.

In Lebanon, in Iraq, and in Iran, millions are demanding a better future, greater justice, less corruption, and more democracy from their governments. These protests expand three countries. Each is unique, but one common thread connects them: Iran.

For years, Iran has systematically sought to undermine the territorial integrity and manipulate the politics of countries all across the Middle East. Nowhere is this more apparent than in Lebanon and Iraq, where Iranian proxies have challenged the very sovereignty of the state.

In Lebanon, Iran backs Hezbollah, the terrorist group that has become a dominant political player. Hezbollah has become a state within a state. Its weapons and fighters do not work to defend the Lebanese state but to embroil it in Syria's civil war and imperil its security by threatening Israel with precision rockets.

In Iraq, Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps has spent years sponsoring Shia militias and proxies that are more loyal to Tehran than to Baghdad or to the people of Iraq.

In both of these countries, Tehran has used and promoted the use of force

to acquire power and to acquire influence. A few weeks ago, the leader of Iran's terrorist Quds Force reportedly flew to Iraq for secret meetings to guide Iraqi leaders through the protests there.

Here is what this Iranian thug told the Iraqis: "We in Iran know how to deal with protests." Enough said.

Well, a violent crackdown on peaceful protesters is not going to resolve anything. What Iraqi and Lebanese leaders must do is stop listening to the poisonous advice of Iranian tyrants, who are losing their own grip on their own people, and start addressing their own citizens' demands for transparency and reform.

Iraq and Lebanon should give their people what they want—less corruption, less malign foreign influence, more opportunity, and the rule of law.

That is the path forward for Iraq and Lebanon. Commit to prosperity and pluralism at home, combat corruption and injustice within all sects and confessions, protect the sovereignty of your country, pursue peace with your neighbors, and enjoy support from the United States as well.

I would note that in contrast to Hezbollah's thugs, Lebanon's Armed Forces by most accounts continue to be one of Lebanon's few institutions of national unity. The LAF has respected the rights of protesters, protected them from violence, and sought to de-escalate tensions on the street.

I know the U.S. military believes its training and partnership with the LAF is paying off, helping it to be a more professional and responsible security force.

So while these events transpire in Iraq and Lebanon, the Iranian people themselves are also engaging in their own demonstrations. Iran used to be a moderate, open, and prosperous society. It could be again. Now tens of thousands of Iranian people themselves are raising their voices in righteous anger at what has become of their living conditions and their country. The Iranian people are feeling the pain inflicted by the brutality, selfishness, and extremism of their ruling class.

The regime seems to be doing all it can to put a stop to this. Reports over the weekend indicated an enormous, unprecedented internet blackout aimed at keeping Iranians in the dark and suggests Iranian leaders are threatening yet another violent crackdown against their own citizens.

But Iran's leaders know exactly what must be done to alter the course of their once-great country and unlock a better future for its citizens. Iran needs to stop pursuing nuclear weapons and long-range missile capabilities, stop supporting terror and cyber offensives, stop causing bloodshed to weaken its neighbors, and stop the horrific mistreatment of its own people.

There is an entire civilized world full of diverse nations that get by just fine—just fine—without engaging in any of these rogue state activities. Iran

engages in all of them. Iranian leaders will either listen to their own citizens and start behaving like a normal nation or they will be treated more and more like the backward pariahs they have become.

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. 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.

HONG KONG

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, over the past few days and weeks, reports about the democratic protests in Hong Kong have grown more and more troubling. The authorities in Hong Kong have cracked down violently on some of the protesters, firing hundreds of rounds of tear gas at a local university and even using lethal force in a few tragic situations. As many have observed, some of the pictures coming out of Hong Kong are reminiscent of a war zone.

Yesterday, the Chinese Communist Party dealt another blow to Hong Kong's special status, criticizing the ruling by the territory's High Court that reversed the Hong Kong Government's ban on masks. The Communist Party declared that only the Chinese legislature has the right to decide whether Hong Kong's laws are consistent with the Hong Kong basic law and that no other authority has the right to make these judgments. That assertion by the Chinese Communist Party is a direct assault on Hong Kong's judicial independence. Make no mistake about it, this Communist Party is cruel and relentless in cracking down on any dissent in every part of China. What they are doing to the Uighurs at the other end of the Chinese country—far away from Hong Kong—is just brutal and awful.

We in the United States stand in solidarity with the democratic protesters, who have every right to assemble and petition their government for the rights of the citizens of Hong Kong. The administration and the President himself should voice their support for the protesters in Hong Kong, which would send an important message to the Chinese Communist Party not to get involved or in any way escalate the situation. Secretary Pompeo's call for calm yesterday is weak tea—not close to enough. Beyond the Presidential statement, there are actions we can take here in Congress because, frankly, I have been very disappointed that the President, in this dramatic situation

with Hong Kong, does not do what Democratic or Republican Presidents have done in the past in standing up for human rights and democracy. He has not done that. He doesn't seem to care. As we know, he seems more eager to please dictators than to please those who are fighting for democracy.

Congress can act. We have a bipartisan bill in the Senate that has many cosponsors, including the senior Senators from Florida and New Jersey and from Maryland as well, that would reaffirm our steadfast support for Hong Kong's autonomy, democracy, and respect for human rights. It would amend the Hong Kong Policy Act in order to give us the tools to safeguard and protect Hong Kong's democracy and autonomy and hold accountable those responsible for the abuse of the human rights of the people of Hong Kong.

There is no objection to this bill on the Democratic side of the aisle. We believe the Senate should pass it. If there are objections on the Republicans' side, let's take a few days and work through the bill on the floor. We haven't done much legislation. Here is a place at which we can come together in a bipartisan way. So, if there are no objections, great. Let's pass it this afternoon. I believe the Senator from Florida will make a unanimous consent request in that regard. If there are objections, I urge the Republican leader, who has spoken out and defended the protests, to take a few days. Let someone try to invoke cloture—it will fail miserably—and let's vote on this. Then, maybe, the House will pass it. That would be something, I think, that would happen and with the President as well.

In addition, the Senator from Oregon, along with some others, has a bill that U.S. companies shouldn't sell lethal types of equipment to the Hong Kong police that have been used on the protesters. I would hope we could find a way to work that proposal into this bill or, maybe, we could make a unanimous consent request alongside it.

Nonetheless, we should pass the bipartisan bill in the Senate, reconcile it with similar legislation in the House, and quickly send it to the President's desk. It would be the strongest action Congress could take immediately to demonstrate Americans' support for the protests in Hong Kong. It would send a strong and clear message to the ruling party in Beijing. It would make a real difference.

The words on the floor the Republican leader mentioned yesterday were good but were not sufficient. Again, I urge him to move on this legislation, if we can, by unanimous consent. If not, let's have a debate on the floor so the handful of Senators who might try to block it are thwarted, and the bill will move forward.

IMPEACHMENT

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, this morning, during the House's im-

peachment inquiry, the American people will hear more important testimony from LTC Alexander Vindman, of the National Security Council, and from Jennifer Williams, an adviser to the Vice President.

Regrettably, some Republicans, including one in this Chamber, have tried, without evidence or substantiation, to undermine, to call into question, and to smear the credibility of the witnesses, including of Lieutenant Colonel Vindman—a Purple Heart recipient who has spent his life in service to our country. The attacks on the witnesses are painful and wrong. They are reminiscent of the actions of a brutal country, not of the democratic Republic that we are.

I hope everyone will treat these witnesses with respect and listen to their testimony with an open mind. Whether they agree or disagree with their testimony, it is unbecoming of any Senator to smear these patriots. The House has a responsibility to seek the truth and uncover all of the facts, and if it comes to it, the Senate has a responsibility to examine the evidence and render impartial judgment.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, finally, on infrastructure, as the impeachment inquiry continues, the Democrats in both Chambers continue to do the work of the American people. Just last week, my colleagues in the House discussed a proposal for a very significant investment in infrastructure. At the very beginning of the Trump administration, the Senate Democrats proposed a trillion-dollar infrastructure plan that would create 15 million jobs.

At our meeting at the White House, I mentioned this to President Trump and asked him to join us in either supporting our bill or in working to modify it in a way that he might be able to support it. At the time, after promising over and over again in his campaign that he would pursue a major overhaul of our Nation's infrastructure, we had hoped President Trump would have worked with us on specific legislation. Unfortunately and typically, after 3 years into the Trump administration, instead of working with the Democrats, President Trump has done next to nothing. Earlier this year, the President walked out of a meeting on infrastructure that was held between him, Speaker PELOSI, me, and some other Congressmen and Senators. We haven't heard from him on the issue since.

Meanwhile, Leader MCCONNELL has turned the Senate into a legislative graveyard and seems uninterested in any bipartisan, bicameral legislation. It is so typical of this administration—of President Trump. He campaigns on infrastructure and has commercials running right now that say the Democrats are not doing anything on infrastructure when he is the one who is doing nothing. He has an amazing

penchant for looking at his own faults and then of pointing the finger at others and saying those faults are theirs. It is glaring on infrastructure.

The idea that the House impeachment inquiry is some sort of distraction from other issues is plain wrong.

President Trump, we are doing nothing here in the Senate. Come talk to us about infrastructure, and we can get something done.

The Democrats in the House and the Democrats in the Senate are willing to work with our Republican colleagues right now. We have over 200 House-passed bills we could consider here on the floor and have plenty of bipartisan Senate bills besides—from bills to lower the cost of prescription drugs to election security, to the Violence Against Women Act. We would like to work on a large infrastructure bill as well. It is entirely up to President Trump and Leader MCCONNELL to decide if we are going to make progress on a topic like infrastructure or if the Senate, under MCCONNELL's leadership, will continue to be a graveyard for commonsense ideas to help so many millions of Americans.

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

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

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

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 senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Robert J. Luck, of Florida, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Eleventh Circuit.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

DEFENSE APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, our most fundamental responsibility as Members of Congress is to provide for our Nation's defense, and a big part of that is ensuring that our men and women in uniform have the resources