

Roy Blunt, John Thune, Steve Daines, Thom Tillis, Kevin Cramer, Chuck Grassley, Tom Cotton, Rand Paul, Roger F. Wicker, Cindy Hyde-Smith.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 489.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Sherri A. Lydon, of South Carolina, to be United States District Judge for the District of South Carolina.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Sherri A. Lydon, of South Carolina, to be United States District Judge for the District of South Carolina.

Steve Daines, Roy Blunt, John Thune, Richard Burr, John Cornyn, Chuck Grassley, Tom Cotton, Rick Scott, Mike Crapo, Shelley Moore Capito, John Boozman, Roger F. Wicker, Cindy Hyde-Smith, David Perdue, Mike Rounds, John Hoeven, Mitch McConnell.

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum calls for the cloture motions be waived.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

HONG KONG

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I would like to comment on the Hong Kong legislation that we passed this week. Tuesday night, the Senate unanimously passed the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act, led by Senators RUBIO and CARDIN, Foreign Relations Chairman RISCH, and Ranking Member MENENDEZ, and a supporting cast of colleagues. This bill is intended to spur Hong Kong officials and pro-Beijing constituencies to protect Hong Kong's autonomy and its

special relationship with the United States and to hold those committing human rights violations in Hong Kong accountable. It builds on the 1992 United States-Hong Kong Policy Act, which asserts that the United States has a "strong interest in the continued vitality, prosperity, and stability of Hong Kong." I am grateful for the leadership of the Senators who worked to advance this bill.

The issue at hand is Hong Kong's right to an independent judicial system and its unique status in a one-country, two-system construct. The bill that spurred the June protests in Hong Kong—a bill pushed by the communist Chinese central government that sought to impose extraditions from Hong Kong to mainland China—would have directly undercut this judicial independence. This bill has been withdrawn, but a number of other grievances have boiled over into protests.

Hong Kong's autonomy is under attack, and China is posturing to "mainlandize" their economy. Recent educational reforms seek to undermine Hong Kong's culture and traditions through compulsory Mandarin classes instead of the Cantonese that most Hongkongers speak. The Chinese Government will say that westerners have the wrong impression of what is going on there, that this is strictly an internal matter. We beg to differ. There are more than 85,000 American citizens in Hong Kong. Moreover, the human rights of the people of Hong Kong are directly tied to U.S. interests in Hong Kong and Hong Kong's economic prosperity.

China has threatened repercussions if the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act is enacted. I imagine China is fearful that attention to human rights abuses in Hong Kong will draw increased attention to other human rights abuses in China, such as the estimated 1.5 million Muslim Uighurs in forced detention in one of China's western provinces.

Papers leaked this week from the government of the Communist Party and General Secretary Xi detail the coercive "reeducation" that goes on in these internment camps. Christians in China also face regular persecution and imprisonment for following their faith and living out their beliefs. The Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act will help shed increased light on Beijing's aggression and on human rights abuses in Hong Kong.

Last night, the House sent this Senate bill to the President's desk with a resounding 417-to-1 vote—a clear statement that Congress stands with Hong Kong.

THANKSGIVING

Madam President, a week from today, we will be celebrating Thanksgiving. Like every Thanksgiving, I will be home in South Dakota celebrating with my family: My wife, my daughters, my sons-in-law, and my four—soon to be five—grandchildren. I will be taking on my traditional job of carving

the turkey and helping with the dishes afterward. I am looking forward to a lot of good pie—apple pie a la mode, pumpkin, with a lot of whipped cream, and my favorite is anything in the creamed-pie family.

I am looking forward to spending time outdoors. My daughters and I traditionally go on a trail run Thanksgiving morning. It is a good way to work up an appetite for all that pie. We all enjoy throwing around a football before or after the meal. South Dakotans are pretty resilient when it comes to being out in the cold. As long as we don't have tons of snow, we like to get outdoors on Thanksgiving.

Like many South Dakotans, I love to squeeze in a little pheasant hunting over Thanksgiving, whenever I can.

Thanksgiving is one of my favorite holidays. I love sitting down with my whole family—and extended family—and getting to spend time in South Dakota outdoors before winter really hits us.

Thanksgiving has a long tradition in this country. Long before the United States was a nation, various Colonies were celebrating days of thanksgiving. Our current celebration of Thanksgiving can be traced to Abraham Lincoln, who issued a proclamation in 1863 inviting a national celebration of Thanksgiving on the last Thursday in November.

In 1941, Congress codified the Thanksgiving holiday and permanently set the date as the fourth Thursday in November. I don't think it is too surprising that the celebration of Thanksgiving is a recurring part of our history. On Thanksgiving in my family, typically, we go around the table and say what we are thankful for. In this country, that is a pretty long list, including the tremendous natural riches of this country, from great rivers to magnificent mountains, to our wide-open access to the sea, and the tremendous freedoms that we enjoy. And in the 21st century, we enjoy freedom of religion, of speech, of the press, and other freedoms, like the freedom from unreasonable searches and seizures, or excessive fines or cruel and unusual punishments. All of these freedoms that we so often take for granted are still unknown to too many people across the world.

The United States is not perfect, and we don't always get it right, but we enjoy tremendous blessings in this country. It is important not to take them for granted. Thanksgiving gives us a chance to pause and reflect on all that we have been given.

I am grateful to God for so many blessings this year. I am thankful for the great blessing of my family—my dad, Harold, a World War II aviator who will turn 100 next month; my brothers and sister; my wife Kimberly, the best thing in my life; my beautiful daughters and my sons-in-law; and our grandchildren, pretty much the most amazing grandchildren ever, in my own unbiased opinion.

I am thankful for the great State of South Dakota, for our fresh air and wide-open spaces, from the prairies of farm country to the rugged terrain of the Black Hills.

South Dakotans are a resilient, kind, and gracious people, and I am thankful every day that I am lucky enough to call South Dakota home.

I am also tremendously grateful for the work I get to do. Getting to represent South Dakotans in the Senate is one of the great privileges of my life. While it has been a contentious year with a divided Congress, I have still had the chance to continue to work on important issues affecting people in my State and around the country, like helping our Nation's farmers and ranchers in this tough agriculture economy.

I am grateful for the privilege of living in this great country, and I am grateful for all the men and women who put their lives on the line every single day to preserve the freedoms we enjoy. Our military men and women represent the very best of America, and I am grateful every day for their service and for their sacrifice.

In that 1863 proclamation of Thanksgiving Day that I mentioned, Abraham Lincoln, in his referring to the blessings America had experienced even in the midst of the horrors of the Civil War, said:

No human counsel hath devised nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy. It has seemed to me fit and proper that they should be solemnly, reverently and gratefully acknowledged as with one heart and one voice by the whole American People.

God has blessed us with very great gifts in this country, and it is, indeed, fit and proper that we should dedicate a day to reverently and gratefully acknowledge them.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

THANKSGIVING

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, first, let me thank my friend from South Dakota for his wonderful words on Thanksgiving.

I was going to conclude with Thanksgiving, but I will start with it. It is a great holiday. It is a great American holiday. I love it, and my family loves it. I was born on Thanksgiving Day. My new grandson was born on November 24, so he will have birthdays on Thanksgiving as well. This year, for the first time, the SCHUMERS will celebrate with four generations, because my parents, who also served in the Army Air Force in World War II—my dad, 96, and my mom, 91—will be there with their little great-grandson, Noah. We are blessed.

Thanksgiving is family and food. What could be better than that? They are two great parts of the holiday. I

will not carve the turkey like THUNE does because it would get all screwed up, but I can dole out the mashed potatoes—I am good at that—which is probably what they will have me do. It is a great holiday, and we do have a great deal to thank God and the country for.

The wonderful thing about Thanksgiving is, from its origins during the Civil War—one of the worst, most horrible times in America, with so much death and mayhem and division—people were still grateful for America, and we are today. It is an amazing place. My father was an exterminator, and I am a U.S. Senator. What an amazing country this is, and we should never stop trying to make it better. I try to do that every day. I am thankful that I live in a country in which you can try to make it better.

I am thankful for many, many things—family, with our new addition this year. Iris and I are so happy about that. We have great kids and a great daughter-in-law and son-in-law. There is just a lot to be thankful for, and it is nice to take a pause, amidst all the fighting and partisanship here, to be grateful.

IMPEACHMENT

Madam President, now, on some more legislative, Senatorial, governmental subjects, the Ambassador to the European Union, Gordon Sondland, provided some of the most significant testimony yesterday in the House impeachment inquiry to date.

Ambassador Sondland asserted a “quid pro quo,” linking the offer of a White House meeting—an official act—in exchange for Ukrainian officials’ announcing an investigation into Burisma and the 2016 elections. President Trump tried to rebut that quid pro quo by saying he told Sondland on the phone there was no quid pro quo. Donald Trump is not known for telling the truth, particularly when his own self-interest is at stake. So it doesn’t stand up very well compared to Sondland’s words.

Sondland went on to testify to his understanding that President Trump’s suspension of military aid to Ukraine was also conditioned on the announcement of these same investigations. Those investigations, of course, had nothing to do with national security or any other interests of the United States. On the contrary, they were solely in President Trump’s personal, political interests.

Ambassador Sondland also testified that Secretary Pompeo, Secretary Perry, Chief of Staff Mulvaney, and other senior advisers to those individuals were well aware of these activities and the connection between White House policy and requests from the President to have Ukraine announce investigations that would be politically advantageous to President Trump.

Let me repeat: Those individuals I just mentioned—Pompeo, Perry, Mulvaney, and a few of their senior advisers—were identified by Ambassador

Sondland as having information and knowledge of the events that are central to this impeachment inquiry. All of them are currently refusing to testify, are defying subpoenas from the House of Representatives, and, in some cases, are challenging those subpoenas in court.

This morning, I would strongly urge the courts that have jurisdiction over these cases to quickly resolve them. The individuals named in these subpoenas are fact witnesses in the pending House impeachment inquiry. In addition, these officials and others are withholding evidence in the form of documents that are, unquestionably, material to the impeachment inquiry. Ambassador Sondland’s testimony demonstrated even more pointedly why it is so essential that the witnesses who have been summoned must comply and why the courts should promptly enforce House subpoenas in the pending cases.

When I hear the courts say that in 5 weeks or in 6 weeks, they will have court hearings or decisions—I have never practiced in these Washington courts; I have a law degree, but I am not a practicing lawyer—I don’t understand, and I think Americans don’t understand why the courts take so long when there is such an important issue before them. All of the judges have a responsibility to make decisions quickly and soon so that if they agree that these people should be compelled to testify—and I don’t know what the decisions will be—that their testimony would be received in a timely manner.

We have two groups of people at the moment. One group is testifying under oath in the House inquiry that there was a “quid pro quo” and substantial wrongdoing. Another group is denying any wrongdoing but is refusing to comply with subpoenas or to testify under oath. If these individuals feel they have exculpatory evidence to provide or that the testimony provided to the House is incorrect, they should testify under oath. Otherwise, the American people will rightly wonder why they refuse to do so.

Let me just repeat what I said in the last few days: If Donald Trump tweets away at how wrong these witnesses are, let him come before the committee, under oath, and testify to what he tweets. Speaker PELOSI has said she would welcome President Trump’s coming and testifying. President Trump has not been silent on these issues. He has been tweeting away—ridiculing the witnesses and saying what they have said is wrong. Well, if he is right, has nothing to hide, and wants to convince the American people and the House of Representatives, let him come under oath and tell his side of the story. When he doesn’t come under oath—and he can do it tomorrow or in the next few days—the American people will ask: Mr. President, what are you hiding? What are you not telling the truth about?