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## Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable CINDY HYDE-SMITH, a Senator from the State of Mississippi.

### PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, who rules the raging of the sea, we come to You today in the assurance not of our feeble hold on You but of Your mighty grasp on us.

Bring peace to our lawmakers that will tune their hearts to the music of Your will. Lead our Senators along the paths of righteousness to still waters and green pastures by Your redeeming grace. May our legislators so serve You that they will contribute to the coming of the day when justice will roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.

We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

### PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

### APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. GRASSLEY).

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,  
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,  
Washington, DC, January 29, 2019.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable CINDY HYDE-SMITH, a Senator from the State of Mississippi, to perform the duties of the Chair.

CHUCK GRASSLEY,  
President pro tempore.

Mrs. HYDE-SMITH thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

### CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

### STRENGTHENING AMERICA'S SECURITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST ACT OF 2019—MOTION TO PROCEED—Resumed

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the unfinished business.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to the consideration of S. 1, a bill to make improvements to certain defense and security assistance provisions and to authorize the appropriation of funds to Israel, to reauthorize the United States-Jordan Defense Cooperation Act of 2015, and to halt the wholesale slaughter of the Syrian people, and for other purposes.

### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The minority leader is recognized.

### GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, hundreds of thousands of Federal workers are, thank God, returning to work this week to tackle a backlog that has been building for over a month. Over that time, the U.S. economy suffered a loss of \$11 billion, according to the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office—\$11 billion for the President's temper tantrum, including \$3 billion that can never be recovered. That is an expensive temper tantrum. The individual costs are even harder than the big numbers.

Who knows how many Federal workers missed a doctor's appointment or fell behind on their payments because they weren't getting their paychecks. Federal contractors will not get backpay and may have lost health insurance entirely during the shutdown. Senator SMITH is working on legislation to fix that problem.

While even Federal employees and contractors are returning to work, they still might be digging out of the hole that the Trump shutdown put them in. I hope this serves as a lesson to President Trump and all of my Republican colleagues—no more shutdown. We cannot repeat this same nightmare scenario in 3 weeks when the CR expires. We Democrats will not shut down the government. We hope President Trump has learned his lesson. He touched a very hot stove. We hope our Republican colleagues will join us, as they did last Thursday, to make sure there is no shutdown. Thankfully, I have heard several of my colleagues say that. A number of them, including some of the most senior Republicans, have said we shouldn't have another shutdown. So we look forward to working with you to avoid that in every possible way.

The House and Senate conferees should strive, instead, to find common ground where it already exists and build from there. The good news is they begin with plenty to work with. Democrats and Republicans agree on the need for stronger border security measures at our ports of entry as well as the need for more humanitarian assistance. That is a good place to start.

Plenty of column inches have been dedicated to the discussion of areas where Republicans and Democrats have friction, but several times over the past 2 years, Congress has come together to reach big compromises, including two budget agreements and a landmark Russia sanctions bill. The common theme of those agreements is that the President stayed out of the

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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negotiations. Because President Trump gave Congress space to find a deal on our own, we were able to strike an accord. That is what we will need again if the conference committee is to succeed, because the President has no understanding of what the realities are in this Senate and in the House and no consistency in what he says one day and what he says the next. As I said, negotiating with President Trump is like negotiating with Jell-O.

So let Democrats and Republicans, the House and Senate, come to an agreement, and my guess is we can avoid a shutdown.

HUAWEI

Madam President, on another matter, yesterday afternoon, the Department of Justice unveiled nearly two dozen charges against the Chinese telecom Huawei in two indictments—one for the evasion of sanctions on Iran and another for its attempts to steal sensitive intellectual property from T-Mobile in the United States.

I am so glad the Justice Department announced these indictments yesterday. China has been flouting international sanction laws and, even worse, stealing IP and know-how for the last decade. State-connected telecom giants like Huawei are an example of how China operates. They are not the exception. They are the rule in China.

When China wants to supplant U.S. dominance in an emerging industry, it acts rapaciously. It steals. Our law enforcement needs to be especially vigilant with Chinese telecom companies such as Huawei and CTE, which intend to displace U.S. communications networks with their own 5G networks because those could give China access to all kinds of sensitive information. U.S. authorities should be prosecuting Huawei's criminal violations to the fullest extent of the law. I give the administration credit for having this suit go forward, but my message to President Trump now is this: Don't back down. While the Trump administration has shown signs of being tougher on China than either the Bush or Obama administration—which I commend them—President Trump has also tried the conciliatory approach, particularly at the moment when the administration is engaged in negotiations with the Chinese.

Just last year, President Trump let ZTE, another state-backed Chinese telecom that violated trade sanctions, off the hook in the hopes of achieving concessions from China on North Korea that never materialized. In December, the President said he would "certainly intervene" in the Huawei case if he thought it were necessary to achieve a trade deal with China.

President Trump, do not make the same mistake you made with ZTE by interfering with the Justice Department's prosecution of Huawei. The United States should not make any concessions unless and until China makes credible and enforceable commitments to end all forms of theft and

extortion of American intellectual property, which is exactly what Huawei is accused of.

KOCH BROTHERS

Madam President, finally, a comment on the Koch brothers. I read a column with interest today in the Washington Post. The Koch network has been trying to rebrand itself as less partisan. They are saying: Let's bring us together. Let's work with both sides.

That is a good instinct, but color me skeptical. The Koch brothers may sit out the Presidential contest, as they did in 2016, but their political arm, Americans for Prosperity, continues to support candidates who are divisive, who do not bring us together. Some of the ads you see, the very candidates they support, are dividing us. You can't, on the one hand, say you want to bring us together and use your political arm to tear us apart. Yet that is what the Koch brothers are doing.

They support the kind of judges who agree with them on all the corporate stuff. They don't want regulation, but they are against voting rights. How does that bring us together? They are against immigrants. How does that bring us together? At the State level, the Koch brothers' network of affiliates continues to support so many different initiatives that divide us. Through support for shadowy think tanks and pseudoacademic institutions, the Koch brothers continue to fund studies that sow doubt about climate change and evangelize deregulation.

It seems their highest priority is still to help the rich and powerful, no matter how divisive it is, as long as we can get our corporate taxes cut even further, cut the taxes for the wealthy, and stop the protections by preventing government regulations for average folks. As long as they do that, all this talk about coming together and supporting an occasional bill here and there doesn't mean much.

I hope that this beginning of what the Koch brothers say spreads. I hope it is not just sort of a figleaf because they are getting such bad publicity, and America is moving so far away from what they believe.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. 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 ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, for weeks, Democrats repeated the same refrain: Open the government, and we will negotiate on border security.

On Friday, the government was reopened. Now it is time for Democrats to honor their promise and work with

Republicans to provide adequate funding to address the security and humanitarian crisis at our border. The next 3 weeks will be a test of Democrats' seriousness about legislating. Do they really want to work with Republicans and the President on solutions? Are they willing to actually negotiate, which involves both sides making compromises, or are they more interested in obstruction? That is the question before the House.

Are they in Congress because they actually want to find solutions to challenges facing our country or are they here to score political points and oppose everything the President says or does? The answers should become pretty clear over the next 3 weeks. If Democrats meant what they said about negotiating on border security, we could produce a bill that will fulfill our responsibility to protect our borders. Make no mistake, it is a responsibility. Perhaps our greatest obligation as Members of Congress is to provide the funding and resources necessary to keep our Nation secure. No nation can be safe if it doesn't know who is coming across its borders.

Right now, we are facing a security crisis at our Nation's border. Tens of thousands of individuals try to cross our southern border illegally every single month. Illegal drugs flow into this country through ports of entry and unsecured areas of the border. The holes in our border security leave us susceptible to illegal entry by gang members, human traffickers, drug dealers, terrorists, weapons traffickers, and more. The flood of illegal immigration has also created a humanitarian crisis. Individuals attempting the journey to come here illegally are vulnerable to exploitation, illness, and abuse. Approximately, one out of every three women attempting the journey to the United States is sexually assaulted. Roughly, 70 percent of individuals become victims of violence along their way. Illness and other medical issues are also a serious problem. By failing to discourage illegal immigration, we are perpetuating this humanitarian crisis.

I hope, over the next 3 weeks, Democrats will honor their promise and come to the table on border security legislation in a real way, ready to engage in genuine negotiation and compromise so we can really address this crisis at our border.

S. 1

Last night, we moved to debate on a package of four bills related to U.S. policy in the Middle East. The Senate attempted to consider these bills earlier this month, but Democrats inexplicably chose to block these bipartisan pieces of legislation on three different occasions—three times. I am hopeful their decision last night to finally support consideration of these bills is a good sign that they are ready to turn to legislating instead of politicking.

The bill package before us this week addresses a number of key issues.

First, it will further strengthen our relationship with Israel, our closest ally in the Middle East. It authorizes 10 years of military assistance funding for Israel and reaffirms our commitment to ensuring that Israel has better weapons and equipment than its enemies. It will also foster increased technological cooperation between Israel and the United States to support the security of both our countries.

This legislation will also strengthen our relationship with another important ally of ours in the Middle East, and that is the Kingdom of Jordan. At a time when Jordan is facing security and humanitarian challenges stemming from the conflict in Syria, it is particularly important that we reaffirm our commitment to this key ally. This legislation will also help hold accountable individuals who supported the atrocities of the Assad regime in Syria. It directs the Treasury Department to investigate whether the Central Bank of Syria launders money for the Syrian Government. Finally, this legislation will protect the rights of State and local governments to decline to do business with entities that have chosen to boycott Israel.

I am glad we finally moved on to these important bills, and I look forward to voting for their final passage, hopefully, in the very near future.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCOTT of Florida). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, I come to the Senate floor today with a sense of great disappointment—disappointment in what my colleague, the senior Senator from Florida, and the Republican leader have done with the bill before us today. They have taken a bill that had broad bipartisan support—maybe unanimous bipartisan support—and tried to turn it into a political weapon. In the process, they are doing a great disservice to the American people and to all of us who value the tradition of strong, bipartisan support for our friend and ally Israel.

I am a cosponsor of the original bill, S. 2497, entitled the “United States-Israel Security Assistance Authorization Act of 2018.” It is a bill to codify the memorandum of understanding between the United States and Israel. It was forged under President Obama and provides Israel with \$38 billion in security assistance over the next 10 years. This includes \$33 billion in foreign military financing funds to Israel and \$5 billion in missile defense assistance for the Iron Dome, David’s Sling, and Arrow 3.

That is a lot of money when you consider the many priorities we have here

at home and abroad. In fact, more than one-half of our entire global foreign military financing—the security assistance we provide to all of our partners and allies around the world—goes to Israel. In my view, that is an important investment. It is an important investment to support our friend and our democratic ally Israel from the many threats it faces in a very dangerous neighborhood—threats from Iran, Syria, Hezbollah, Hamas, and many others.

We need to make sure Israel maintains a strong military edge to defend itself, and that is why there was strong bipartisan support for that original bill. But then the Republican leader took a bill with broad bipartisan support for Israel and added a provision designed to retaliate against American citizens who express their disagreement with certain policies of the Government of Israel by participating in certain boycott activities. Specifically, the Senator from Florida added a provision that encourages States throughout the country to pass laws to punish American citizens who choose to protest the settlement policies of the government of Prime Minister Netanyahu by either boycotting products made in Israeli settlements in the West Bank or by not otherwise engaging in commerce with such settlements.

I want to make this clear. While I disagree with some of the policies adopted by the Netanyahu government in Israel, I do not—I do not—in any way support a boycott as a method of expressing those disagreements. Let me be equally clear. I will fiercely defend the constitutional right of any American citizen to express his or her views in such a peaceful way if they so choose, just as I would support the right of every American to engage in other political boycotts to peacefully express their political views without fear of being punished by their government.

The Senator from Florida and apparently the Republican leader want to use the power of the State to punish American citizens who disagree with them on this issue. It is right here in the bill. Let me read some of the relevant parts of the bill that is before us today: A State may adopt and enforce measures . . . to restrict contracting by the State for goods and services with any entity that . . . knowingly engages in . . . boycott activity . . . intended to limit commercial relations with Israel or persons doing business in Israel or Israeli-controlled territories for purposes of imposing policy positions on the Government of Israel.

How does this new provision encourage States to retaliate against American citizens? It is pretty clear from that language. It encourages States to pass laws to deny citizens the right to bid on any State contract unless—unless—those citizens sign an oath stating that they do not or will not engage in any boycott of Israel, including any boycott related to the sale or purchase

of goods or services from Israeli settlements in the West Bank.

Think about that. Let’s say you are an American citizen living in my State of Maryland. Let’s say you own a computer consulting business, and you happen to disagree with Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu’s government policy of expanding settlements on the West Bank near the city of Bethlehem, and you want to express your opposition to that policy. Let’s say you choose to protest that policy by deciding that you will not provide your services to businesses located in those settlements on the West Bank. If you did that, you would be prohibited by these State laws from bidding on a contract to provide computer consulting services to a Maryland State agency. Think about that. You may run the best computer consulting business in the State of Maryland, but if you don’t sign an oath renouncing your right to engage in a boycott, you cannot win any contract with the State. In other words, even if you were the best, most qualified bidder, you would be disqualified from winning that State contract because of your peaceful political activity, having nothing to do with your ability to fulfill the contract. Does that sound unconstitutional? Yes, it is blatantly unconstitutional. And guess what. That is what two Federal courts have already concluded about State laws that already do what Senator RUBIO’s bill is proposing. I am going to review those decisions in a moment, but before I do, let me respond to the very flimsy defense the senior Senator from Florida and others have offered to try to justify this effort to punish free expression.

Here is what Senator RUBIO tweeted: “Opposition to our bill isn’t about FREE speech. Companies are FREE to boycott Israel. But local & state governments should be FREE to end contracts with companies that do.”

This reflects a profound misunderstanding of the First Amendment. It turns the First Amendment on its head. It is like saying to our fellow Americans: You are free to peacefully express yourselves however you want, but the government is then free to use the power of the State to punish you for doing so. You are free to express your political opinions, but if we don’t like what you say, the State is free to pass laws to prevent you from doing any business with the State.

That is State-sponsored discrimination against disfavored political expression.

I would remind my colleagues that the First Amendment is not designed to protect the government from its citizens; it is designed to protect citizens who may engage in unpopular speech from retaliation by the government.

What if a State passed a law to penalize gun control advocates who boycotted stores that sold semiautomatic weapons? What if a State retaliated against anti-abortion activists who

boycotted health clinics that provided abortion services? We would all agree that is blatantly unconstitutional.

Senator RUBIO's proposal and the proposal advanced by the Republican leader is a textbook example of why we have a First Amendment.

I have heard others defend this measure by saying: "It is simply a law to boycott the boycotters." That is a cute slogan but, again, shows a stunning ignorance of the First Amendment.

Yes, any of us as individuals can always decide to boycott those whose boycotts we disagree with. Each of us as individuals is free to boycott those businesses that choose to boycott Israeli settlements in the West Bank, but that is not what this bill does. This bill calls upon States to use the power of the State, to use the power of government to punish peaceful political actions that we don't like. Again, that is patently unconstitutional.

That is the conclusion reached by two Federal courts that struck down the kinds of State laws Senator RUBIO and others seek to promote.

In Kansas, a Federal judge blocked the enforcement of a State law requiring any State contractor to submit a written certification that they are "not currently engaged in a boycott of Israel."

In the Kansas case, a woman who served as a public school math teacher for 9 years was barred from participating in a State-sponsored teacher training program because she refused to sign a certification that she wasn't participating in a boycott of Israel.

The court found that the anti-boycott certification requirement was designed to suppress political speech and was, according to the court, "plainly unconstitutional." In his opinion, the judge wrote: "The Supreme Court has held that the First Amendment protects the right to participate in a boycott like the one punished by the Kansas law." That is what the Federal district court judge stated.

In Arizona, a Federal court blocked a State law requiring contractors to certify that they will not boycott Israel, finding, again, that the law violates the right of free speech.

In this case, an attorney contracted with the Arizona State government to provide legal services to help individuals in prison. Because of his political views, the attorney refused to purchase goods from businesses supporting Israeli settlements in the West Bank. Because he would not submit to a written certification that he wasn't boycotting Israel, he was barred from contracting with the State to provide legal services.

In this Arizona case, the court held that "a restriction on one's ability to participate in collective calls to oppose Israel unquestionably burdens the protected expression of companies wishing to engage in a boycott. The type of collective action targeted by the [law] specifically implicates the rights of assembly and association that Americans

and Arizonans use 'to bring about political, social, and economic change.'"

There are a number of other challenges to laws requiring government contractors to certify they are not boycotting Israel or Israeli settlements on the grounds that they violate American's fundamental right to free speech—a right that Americans have even when their speech is not supported by a majority of us. That is the whole purpose of the First Amendment.

In Texas, there are two pending First Amendment challenges to a law requiring State contractors to certify they will not boycott Israel or its settlements. In the first Texas lawsuit, four individuals were required to choose between signing a certification that they are not participating in a peaceful boycott or losing income and other professional opportunities. These individuals include a freelance writer who lost two service contracts from the University of Houston; a reporter who was forced to sign the certification against his conscience in order to keep his job; and a Ph.D. candidate at Rice University who was forced to forfeit payment for judging at a debate tournament. It caused a student at Texas State University to forgo opportunities to judge high school debate tournaments.

In the second lawsuit, a Texas speech pathologist who had worked with developmentally disabled autistic and speech impaired elementary school opportunities for 9 years was fired because she refused to sign an addendum to her contract renewal saying she would not boycott Israel or Israeli settlements.

In my home State of Maryland, a software engineer is challenging an executive order requiring contractors to certify in writing that they are not boycotting Israel or its settlements. In that case, the individual was barred from bidding on government software program contracts because he would not sign such a certification.

These laws are blatantly unconstitutional.

Let me speak briefly to a recent court decision in Arkansas in which a Federal district court judge ruled in favor of a State law prohibiting Arkansas from contracting with or investing in individuals or firms that boycott Israel or its settlements.

This district court decision is destined for the dustbin of history. I am not sure any Senator on either side of the aisle wants to be associated with its holding.

It concludes that a boycott "is not speech, inherently expressive activity, or subject to constitutional protection." The banner right there on page 9 of the judge's opinion reads: "A Boycott is Neither Speech Nor Inherently Expressive Conduct." In other words, according to that district judge, States can pass laws banning or penalizing boycotts they don't like.

Years ago—and it was many years ago—as a college student, I was active in the movement to get companies to

divest from South Africa and boycotting companies that did business with the apartheid regime in South Africa. Under the Arkansas court decision, a State could pass a law that would ban that conduct or would at least penalize me if I wanted to do business with the State as a sole proprietor and sought State contracts.

There is no doubt that the Arkansas decision will be overturned. The Supreme Court explicitly held in the case of the NAACP v. Claiborne Hardware that the First Amendment protects the right to participate in a boycott for political purposes. The judge in the Arkansas case attempts to narrow that NAACP holding in a way that is clearly inconsistent with First Amendment protections. I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to read all three Federal district court decisions from Kansas, Arizona, and Arkansas.

As I said earlier, I do not support the boycott of Israel as a means of pressing the Netanyahu government to change some of its policies. There are much better ways. We have to try to encourage our friend and ally to change some of the policies they disagree with.

Here is what I predict: I predict that the boycott movement will continue to grow for a number of reasons. At the top of that list is the fact that the Trump administration's actions, and inactions, are adding oxygen to the boycott movement.

To start, the Trump administration has abandoned any pretense of trying to prevent the expansion of Israeli settlements in new parts of the West Bank. There has been a big jump in the number of tenders and settlement plans since President Trump took office. In fact, our Ambassador there, Ambassador Freidman, has been a vocal cheerleader for additional settlements in new areas on the West Bank. In doing so, the Trump administration has abandoned what has been a long-held bipartisan position of the U.S. Government. Here are a few statements from Presidents of both parties over the last 40 years:

President Ronald Reagan, in 1982, said that "settlement activity is in no way necessary for the security of Israel and only diminishes the confidence of the Arabs that a final outcome can be freely and fairly negotiated."

President H.W. Bush, in 1990, said: "The foreign policy of the United States says we do not believe there should be new settlements in the West Bank or in East Jerusalem."

President Clinton, in 2001, said that "the settlement enterprise and building bypass roads in the heart of what they already know will one day be part of a Palestinian state is inconsistent with the Oslo commitment that both sides negotiate a compromise."

President George W. Bush, in 2002, said: "Israeli settlement activity in occupied territories must stop, and the occupation must end through withdrawal to secure and recognized boundaries."

Finally, President Obama, in 2009, said: “The United States does not accept the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlements. This construction violates previous agreements and undermines efforts to achieve peace. It is time for these settlements to stop.”

So there you have a continuous line of bipartisan Presidents, Republicans and Democrats, expressing U.S. policy on the issue of settlements. The provision before us today in this bill directly contradicts this long-stated U.S. policy by drawing no distinction between someone boycotting businesses located in the State of Israel and someone boycotting businesses located in settlements in the territories. In other words, the provision before us—and the State laws it promotes—supports the same penalty for those who boycott commerce with a business in Tel Aviv as it does those who boycott commerce with businesses in the settlements, including outposts that may be illegal even under Israeli law. This provision before us erases an important distinction in American policy that has been endorsed by Presidents of both parties.

One of the reasons for discouraging settlements and outposts in new areas is to preserve the option of a two-state solution—an option that has previously been supported by Presidents of both parties, as well as pro-Israel groups, including AIPAC, J Street, and others. It is a demographic reality that in order to ensure a Jewish state that is democratic and provides equal rights to all its citizens, there must be a two-state solution.

Such a solution should come about through a negotiated settlement between the parties—between the Israelis and the Palestinians. We all know that dysfunction and obstruction on the Palestinian side has been one obstacle to reaching an agreement, but that does not justify changing the status quo on the ground by adding settlements in new areas that will make a two-state solution impossible.

Second, the Trump administration, under the guidance of the President's designated Middle East Senior Adviser, his son-in-law Jared Kushner, has embarked on an undisguised effort to crush the Palestinians by revoking all U.S. humanitarian assistance. Here we are, authorizing \$38 billion for U.S. military support for Israel—something I strongly support and am a cosponsor of—but at the same time, the Trump administration has eliminated humanitarian and other assistance to help the Palestinian people, many of whom are living in horrible conditions. The Trump administration has eliminated assistance that helps provide medical care, clean water, and food to hundreds of thousands of vulnerable Palestinian children and families. Much of this assistance is provided by organizations like Catholic Relief Services and the Lutheran World Federation.

President Trump has also eliminated \$25 million in U.S. support to a network of six hospitals in East Jeru-

salem, support the Congress explicitly protected under the Taylor Force Act. In doing this, he gutted funding for the main hospitals providing cancer treatment for patients in the West Bank and Gaza and kidney dialysis for children. These hospitals include Lutheran Augusta Victoria Hospital, the Anglican St. John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital, and the Catholic St. Joseph Hospital—American-founded institutions that fall under our American Schools and Hospitals Abroad Program.

The Trump administration has eliminated support for those programs, but the effort to crush the Palestinians into submitting to a one-sided agreement will never work. President Trump and Jared Kushner apparently think this is just another real estate deal where you turn off the water and electricity to force your tenants out. Instead, these actions by the Trump administration will only add fuel to the boycott movement because many people will see no other vehicle for expressing their views.

Finally, to the senior Senator from Virginia and others supporting this provision, nothing—nothing—will motivate Americans to exercise their rights more than efforts to suppress them. Trying to suppress free speech—even unpopular speech, even conduct we don't support here and I don't support—will only add momentum.

I will end where I started. It is a really shameful and disappointing day when the sponsors of this legislation took a bill demonstrating strong bipartisan support for Israel, for our friends and allies who share our commitment to democracy and share other values we hold dear—some Senators took that bill and used it as an attack on the constitutional rights of American citizens who may want to peacefully demonstrate their opposition to some of the Netanyahu government's policies, not in the way the Presiding Officer would choose, not in the way I would choose, but in a way they have a right to do as American citizens.

In making these changes to the bill, the sponsors are sabotaging what was a bipartisan bill to support our friend and ally Israel and, in the process, strengthening the very boycott movement we seek to oppose. That hurts Israel, that hurts the United States, and it is a really sad day in the U.S. Senate when we take something that we have all agreed on and decide to use it to attack the constitutional rights of American citizens with whom we may disagree. I am sorry it has come to this point. I hope my colleagues will think about this as we move forward in this debate.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. 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 MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

S. 1

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, yesterday afternoon, Senate Democrats finally dropped their filibuster of S. 1, the Strengthening America's Security in the Middle East Act. It took 24 days and 4 cloture votes, but enough of my Democratic colleagues have now voted to advance this legislation concerning America's role in the world.

As I mentioned before, the bill would reaffirm our Nation's commitment to Israel's security through military assistance and cooperative missile defense, as well as loan guarantees. It would deepen our ties of strategic cooperation with Jordan, as the security and humanitarian ramifications of the Syrian civil war continue to take their toll, and the legislation also includes the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act, which would hold accountable those who have enabled and carried out the butchery of the Assad regime.

But I would like to take a few moments this morning to discuss an amendment that I plan to propose as well. The amendment I plan to propose would expand on the legislation and take a further step to emphasize the need for American leadership in our troubled world, particularly with respect to our ongoing fight against al-Qaida and ISIS in Syria and Afghanistan. My amendment would acknowledge the plain fact that al-Qaida, ISIS, and their affiliates in Syria and Afghanistan continue to pose a serious threat to us here at home. It would recognize the danger of a precipitous withdrawal from either conflict and highlight the need for diplomatic engagement and political solutions to the underlying conflicts in Syria and Afghanistan.

We have seen the costs of a precipitous withdrawal before in Iraq, and in Afghanistan, we have seen the downsides of telling the enemy they can just wait us out; we will be gone on a date certain.

My amendment would also urge continued commitment from the U.S. military and our partners until—until—we have set the conditions for the enduring defeat of these vile terrorists. This measure would reflect the conclusions of our Nation's military and national security professionals. It would speak directly to our allies and reassure our local partners who are doing the bulk of the fighting against a shared enemy.

Simply put, while it is tempting to retreat to the comfort and security of our own shores, there is still a great deal of work to be done, and we know that left untended, these conflicts will reverberate right here in our own cities.

We are not the world's policemen, but we are the leader of the free world, and it is incumbent upon the United States to lead, to continue to maintain a global coalition against terror, and to stand by our local partners who are

engaged in the daily fight against the terrorists.

My amendment would further condemn Iran for its hampering of diplomatic efforts and its destabilizing work throughout the region. It would call for greater consultation with the United States' allies and partners in the region, especially Israel, with regard to future stability we seek in a critical region, and it would reiterate the importance of the administration's consulting and coordinating with Congress on its long-term strategies for success in these struggles, including a thorough accounting of the risk of withdrawing too hastily.

I am glad that, after needless political delays, our Democratic colleagues finally allowed a first procedural vote on this legislation.

I am proud to support its provisions that concern Israel, Jordan, and Syria, and I will be proud to offer this amendment so the Senate can speak equally clearly on the fight against al-Qaida, ISIS, and other bad actors that needs to continue in both Syria and Afghanistan.

H.R. 1

Mr. President, on a totally different matter, this week Democrats in the House are beginning the committee process for a bill they are saying is their party's signature priority for this Congress—their signature priority. They are so focused on this legislation that they have given it the ceremonial designation of H.R. 1—their top priority.

I think it more accurately could be described another way: the “Democratic Politician Protection Act.” This sprawling proposal—sprawling, comprehensive proposal—is basically the far left's entire Christmas wish list where our Nation's political process is concerned.

What would it do? It would pile new Washington-focused regulations onto virtually every aspect of how politicians are elected and what Americans can say about them.

My Democratic friends have already tried to market this unprecedented intrusion with all the predictable clichés: “restoring democracy,” “for the people.”

Really? The only common motivation running through the whole proposal seems to be this: Democrats searching for ways to give Washington politicians more control over what Americans say about them and how they get elected. It is an attempt to rewrite the rules of American politics in order to benefit one side over the other.

I expect I will be talking about the “Democratic Politician Protection Act” here on the floor for a long time, but I wanted to just take a few minutes today to give my colleagues a quick tour—just a quick tour through a few of its components.

To begin with, Democrats want to make the Federal Elections Commission a partisan institution. Since Wa-

tergate, the FEC has been a six-member body. Neither party gets more than three seats—neither party. After all, the reason for that is this is a Commission with the sensitive duty of regulating Americans' speech—Americans' speech about politics and campaigns themselves.

The FEC should not be a weapon that one political party can wield against its rivals, but the legislation the Democrats are moving through committee would throw away—throw away—the bipartisan split. It would reduce the FEC to a five-member body and—listen to this—let sitting Presidents pick the majority—let sitting Presidents pick the majority. Obviously, this is a recipe for turning the FEC into a partisan weapon.

Democrats also empower the newly partisan FEC to regulate more of what Americans can say. That 3-to-2 FEC would get to determine what they subjectively see as “campaign related,” a new vague category of regulated speech.

There would also be new latitude to decide when a nonprofit's speech has crossed that same fuzzy line and subsequently force the publication of the group's private supporters.

All of this appears to be custom built to chill the exercise of the First Amendment and give Federal bureaucrats and the waiting leftwing mob a clearer idea of just whom to intimidate.

And this just scratches the surface of this proposal. The House Democrats are also eyeing an expensive new set of taxpayer subsidies for political campaign consultants. They want a new six-fold government match for certain types of political contributions—a new federally funded voucher program to line politicians' pockets with even more taxpayer dollars, plus—listen to this. That wasn't enough—taking our tax money to spend on attack ads and bumper strips and the like. Listen to this: 6 additional days of paid vacation for any Federal bureaucrat who decides they would like to hover around a polling place while Americans cast ballots.

So the new taxpayer subsidies don't even pass the laugh test, but other aspects of the bill are even more disturbing. Perhaps most worrisome of all is the unprecedented proposal to federalize our elections, giving Washington politicians even more control over who gets to come here in the first place.

Hundreds—literally hundreds—of pages are dedicated to telling States how to run their elections, from when and where they must take place to the procedures they have to follow, to the machines they have to use.

Democrats want to import the inefficiencies of State and Federal bureaucracy to ballot boxes and voter rolls, while making it harder for States and localities to clean inaccurate data off the voter rolls, harder to remove duplicate registrations, ineligible voters, and errors, and harder to check every

box Washington Democrats demand before allowing you to pick your representatives.

Provision after provision would make it easier for campaign lawyers to take advantage of disorganization, chaos, and confusion. Yet the proposal does practically nothing to combat the real live voter fraud that does happen right before our eyes.

It is suspiciously silent on the murky “ballot harvesting” practices that recently threw North Carolina's Ninth Congressional District into total chaos. There are pages and pages rewriting election law but nothing on this actual problem, perhaps because similar practices are perfectly legal in California—perfectly legal—where the Democratic Party made big gains in the House just last November.

So like I said, this has just been an introductory tour I am giving this morning—just an introductory tour. This sprawling power grab clocks in at 570 pages—570 pages. Seemingly every one of these pages is filled with some effort to rewrite the rules to favor the Democrats and their friends.

I have to say this: Our colleagues across the Capitol know what they are after. So I am going to continue to shed light on these far-left proposals many mornings. I want to make sure the American people understand what this is all about. I want to assure the American people, right from the outset, that my colleagues and I will fight to prevent this one-sided power grab. It may pass the House, but not the Senate.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CRUZ). The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

## RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:31 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mrs. CAPITO).

## STRENGTHENING AMERICA'S SECURITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST ACT OF 2019—MOTION TO PROCEED—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will come to order.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding rule XXII, at 3 o'clock p.m. today, all postcloture time on the motion to proceed to S. 1 expire and the