

Mr. Evanina's nomination will make him the first Senate-confirmed Director of the NCSC. This role represents our government's senior-most expert in counterintelligence. Fortunately, this nominee has served for 3 decades as special agent with the FBI, as chief of the CIA's Counterespionage Group, and as one of the principal advisers to the Director of National Intelligence.

Mr. Evanina's long professional experience has given him a well-trained eye. He has made clear he is focused on the most serious espionage threats facing our country today: China's insidious efforts to steal our industrial, governmental, technological, and political secrets and Russia's continuing efforts to meddle in our democracy. We have a qualified professional who is tailor-made for an important job. Our colleagues on the Intelligence Committee have reported him out on a unanimous bipartisan basis twice. The vice chairman, Senator WARNER, said: "Bill Evanina should be confirmed without further delay."

But even still, our Democratic colleagues chose to obstruct his nomination on the floor this week and require a full day of floor time to confirm. Ironically, at the same time, we have also heard some of our Democratic colleagues complain that we spend too much time voting on nominations. It is bad enough to spend 3 years delaying nominations to a historic degree and deliberately making the process painful, but it reached a new level of irony for our Democratic friends to do all that and then complain that their own strategy is inconveniencing their schedules.

Essential matters of government do not cease because of the coronavirus. They do not cease because of partisanship either. As long as Senate Democrats continue to make incredibly qualified nominees travel the hard way, including someone whom their own Democratic ranking member openly praised, then, I will assure them they will need to continue to show up and cast votes. The country's business will not go undone.

NOMINATION OF JUSTIN WALKER

Mr. President, speaking of nominations, this morning our colleagues on the Judiciary Committee are examining the qualifications of Judge Justin Walker. Judge Walker is a fellow Kentuckian. He is a district judge of the Western District of Kentucky, and he is President Trump's nominee to serve on our second most important Federal Court, the Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia.

I am grateful to Chairman GRAHAM and all the other chairmen who are finding creative ways to conduct important business. The Senate is demonstrating that the work of governing must and can continue, albeit in new ways.

So to respect this time of social distancing, I am going to offer my introduction here on the floor instead of over in the committee. Since Judge

Walker was tapped to serve the people of Kentucky on the Federal district bench, he wasted no time in expanding his strong reputation for intellectual brilliance, legal acumen, and total fairness and impartiality.

In just the last few weeks, Judge Walker has won national attention for an eloquent and persuasive opinion that forcefully defended Kentuckians' basic First Amendment freedom of religion, and he has earned a "well-qualified" rating from the left-leaning American Bar Association that Senate Democrats, like my friend the Democratic leader, have frequently described as "the gold standard."

Let me say that again. In the span of just a couple of weeks, almost simultaneously, Judge Walker has won praise from religious freedom advocates nationwide and the approval of the ABA, which Democrats call "the gold standard." That illustrates the kind of impressive individual the committee is considering this morning.

Already, Judge Walker's reputation as a brilliant legal rising star precedes him. Yet, when you consider the full scope of his education and experience, it is hardly a surprise. Judge Walker graduated from Duke University summa cum laude. He graduated from Harvard Law School magna cum laude, and he edited the Law Review.

He had prestigious clerkships at the DC Circuit for then-Judge Brett Kavanaugh and at the Supreme Court for then-Justice Anthony Kennedy. He learned at the elbows of legal giants. Then, he moved on to skilled performance in private practice, and then to distinguished scholarship at the University of Louisville Law School, with particular expertise in national security, administrative law, and the separation of powers.

Indeed, it is an impressive record. As Kentucky's secretary of State, Mike Adams, put it recently, "Judge Walker is more than just a [C.V.]." Hence, the outpouring of praise from his peers, colleagues, and neighbors in Kentucky who know him well. One hundred Kentucky lawyers, many of whom have practiced before Judge Walker in the district court, wrote to praise his "courage to apply precedent faithfully." Sixteen State attorneys general wrote to share their confidence in Judge Walker's ability to "weigh the facts against the law as it is written . . . not as he wishes it to be."

I am confident our colleagues on the committee will find that this nominee possesses a generational legal mind, a kind heart, and total judicial impartiality.

President Trump made an outstanding choice when he asked this Kentuckian to take his public service to the next level. I am confident Judge Walker will not disappoint. I urge the committee to approve his nomination. I look forward to voting to confirm him soon here on the Senate 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. SCHUMER. 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 MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

NOMINATION OF JUSTIN WALKER

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, the Senate is here, open for business. The janitors and food service workers, police officers, and all the staff who operate the floor are here. They are all here. Capitol Police are doing their usual excellent job.

The Republican leader called us back despite the obvious health risks, but we are ready to do the business our country demands. So there is a question that looms: Why isn't the Senate focused on responding to the COVID-19 pandemic? There hasn't been a single vote here on the Senate floor related to coronavirus—not even a nominee related to coronavirus.

Rather than focusing on COVID-19 with laser-like intensity, the Senate Judiciary Committee today will waste precious time on the nomination of Leader MCCONNELL's protegee, Justin Walker, to serve on the DC Court of Appeals, the second most powerful court in the country.

Mr. Walker is a 37-year-old Federalist Society disciple who has more experience as a cable news commentator than he does trying cases in court. Mr. Walker's qualifications pale in comparison to those of previous nominees to the DC Circuit—Democrat and Republican. Nominees by Democratic Presidents and Republican Presidents all were deeply steeped in the law—just about every one—and here we have this?

What Leader MCCONNELL is doing to the courts is nothing short of disgraceful. The judges currently sitting on the second highest court in the land had decades of experience in Supreme Court advocacy, appellate work, criminal law, private practice, academia, and so on, prior to their nominations. Mr. Walker has been a district court judge for less than a year—less than a year. He had no trial experience prior to that.

Inexperience aside, bad enough as that is, Walker's views are way out of the mainstream. In 2018, he described Chief Justice Roberts' opinion upholding our healthcare law as "indefensible" and "catastrophic." Meanwhile, he praised a dissenting opinion by then-Judge Kavanaugh as a "roadmap for the Supreme Court" to invalidate it.

Every Republican who votes for this nominee, Mr. Walker, will be voting to dismantle the ACA and take millions of people's healthcare away from them if his statements prove to be how he judges things, which seems very likely given previous experience of other nominees like this.

This week, legal briefs are due in the Supreme Court case that will determine the future of our healthcare law. In the midst of a global pandemic, at a time when our healthcare system has never been more important, Senate Republicans are preparing to jam through a judge who believes it should all be crashing down. Tens of millions of people would lose their health insurance, and protections for Americans with preexisting conditions would be eliminated.

Mr. Walker's nomination would be controversial in normal times, to say the least—less experience in the court than on TV. During this public health crisis, his nomination is nothing short of a disgrace. The Senate should be focused on helping the country—hospitals and doctors, nurses and healthcare workers, essential employees and small businesses and families suffering from huge financial hardship.

There are millions of newly unemployed Americans, but the only jobs issue the Republican majority seems to be focused on this week is the jobs of rightwing judges who wish to dismantle healthcare at a time when healthcare is needed more than ever. Let me say that again. There are millions of newly unemployed Americans, but in the Senate, the Republican majority is spending time giving jobs to rightwing judges.

Now, let's get back to what matters. Democrats are focused on helping workers, small businesses, and American families. In times of crisis and economic hardship, these average Americans, working people—they take it on the chin. That is where our focus needs to be—not on legal immunity for big corporations, not on big oil or gas companies, not on juicing the markets. The focus should be on average folks. That is who all of us in Congress should be focused on helping right now.

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Now, on the administration, Congress can only do so much. I have actually been very proud of how both parties have come together over the past few months to pass historic legislation 96 to nothing—96 to nothing—with a great deal of input and improvement by the Democratic minority. But to make this legislation work, we need a competent, steady, focused administration to not only implement our laws but coordinate our national response.

It is no secret that the Trump administration has been anything but focused, anything but steady, anything but competent. President Trump seems to spend more time deflecting blame, attacking others, pushing quack medicines, and hiding from the truth than he does actually leading our Nation's response to this crisis.

Last night, in an interview on ABC News, the President said that his failure to prepare our national stockpiles with medical equipment was because "he had a lot of other things going on." The national stockpile for the vital PPE that our frontline workers need

and other materials—the President failed to prepare our stockpiles with this equipment because he had a lot of other things going on? That is a President?

Vice President PENCE yesterday confirmed that the White House was winding down its Coronavirus Task Force long before the disease has been contained, waving the white flag of surrender to COVID-19 long before the battle is over.

A report in today's New York Times details the failures of the administration and Mr. Kushner in particular to procure critical supplies at a time when we lack masks, gloves, and other protective equipment. Instead of appointing a military person with experience in command and control, as I suggested, Mr. Kushner recruited a team of consultants who had "little to no experience with government procurement procedures or medical equipment."

Now we are reading reports of a whistleblower from the Department of Health and Human Services who reports that there was "pressure from HHS leadership to ignore scientific merit and expert recommendations and instead to award lucrative contracts based on political connections and cronyism." This whistleblower is scheduled to appear before a House committee next week. This whistleblower should come before the Senate as well. Senators have many questions to ask him. I believe Senators on both sides of the aisle would have those questions.

So this was and is a time when the American people need the executive branch to lead a coordinated response to this evil virus, to listen to medical experts, to heed their advice, to respect and listen to science, but President Trump seems unwilling and unable to handle the truth, and it is hurting our country each and every day.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

NATIONAL NURSES WEEK

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, today is the first day of National Nurses Week—an annual commemoration each May celebrating the contributions of nurses—so today seemed like a fitting day to come down to the floor and talk about the contributions of nurses and other essential workers over the past couple of months.

When we think about heroism, we tend to think of striking actions that take place in extreme circumstances—running into burning buildings, jumping onto a grenade to save a fellow soldier, racing out under fire to rescue a wounded comrade. And it is right that when we think of heroism, we think of such acts—acts of superhuman courage, generosity, and self-sacrifice.

The past couple of months have also reminded us of another kind of heroism—the quiet heroism of doing one's duty, of getting up and going to work and doing your job day after day in difficult circumstances, even when you are tired, even when you are scared, even when you know that doing your job could place you in danger. We have seen a lot of that heroism over the past couple of months.

A lot of Americans have been able to telework during the coronavirus crisis, but many, many more have had to go out and do the work that can't be done from home: police officers, first responders, pharmacists, grocery store employees, farmers and ranchers, food supply workers, cleaning personnel, bank employees, utility workers, delivery drivers, and most of all, doctors and nurses.

Over the past few weeks, we have come to realize how much we rely on these individuals and that society couldn't operate without them. All the food in the world won't do us any good if it doesn't make it to grocery store shelves. That prescription from the doctor for lifesaving blood pressure medication is useless without a pharmacist to dispense the drug. We tend to take our utilities for granted, but what would we do during this crisis if no one was picking up our trash or making sure that the water keeps running and the electricity keeps flowing?

Sometimes heroism looks like running into a burning building, and sometimes it looks like putting on a mask and gloves and stocking the shelves with bread and pasta and cereal.

I want to say a special word about medical personnel. Of all the essential workers who have gotten up and gotten on with their duty in these days of the pandemic, medical personnel have displayed a special courage. They have been on the frontlines of this battle, the ones directly confronting the disease. Every day when they go to work, they go to work knowing that day could be the day they catch the virus from a sick patient, but they go to work anyway. They have read about and sometimes seen colleagues die from the disease. At times, they have lacked adequate protective equipment, but they have gone to work anyway.

Those nurses we are celebrating this week have worked 12-hour shifts providing medical care in a high-stress environment and have still found time to sit with and comfort patients. I have read more than one story about nurses making sure coronavirus patients separated from family and friends don't die alone.

To our Nation's doctors and nurses and other medical personnel: Thank you. We are so grateful for your courage and for your sacrifice.

Before I close, I want to say a special thank-you to the essential workers around the Capitol Complex here in Washington.

While Senators have been able to do aspects of our job remotely, we have