

which says a majority of each House shall constitute a quorum to do business. For about 231 years, Congress has managed to fulfill this job requirement. They worked through a Civil War, two World Wars, terrorist threats, and a major pandemic without trying to shirk this duty. The 12th Congress endured the War of 1812, including the occupation of Washington and the burning of this very building that we are in right now without abandoning in-person meetings.

The Constitution requires a physical quorum to do business. Normally, both Chambers may presume one. But any House Member has a right to demand an in-person attendance check. The Democrats' new rule says one person may mark himself and 10 others present, even if they are nowhere in sight, which is a flatout lie.

There will be enormous constitutional questions around anything the House does if they fail to demonstrate a real quorum, but plow ahead anyhow. They have had 2 normal workdays in 8 weeks and one absurd, unserious proposal. And now they are playing games with the Constitution so they can continue their never-ending spring break well into July.

Let's come over here to the Senate. In the past 3 weeks, we have filled crucial posts at the National Counterintelligence and Security Center, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, and the Department of Homeland Security.

Today, we will confirm the next Director of National Intelligence. JOHN RATCLIFFE will lead the intelligence community in countering threats from great powers, rogue nations, and terrorists, and ensuring that work is untainted by political bias.

The Banking Committee heard from Chairman Powell and Secretary Mnuchin on the workings of the CARES Act and the state of our economy. The Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee has reported the nominee to be Special Inspector General for Pandemic Recovery Programs.

The Special Committee on Aging is examining all the ways this crisis has hurt America's seniors.

The HELP Committee has discussed with top experts like Dr. Fauci and Admiral Giroir how schools, universities, and businesses will begin to reopen.

Senator CORNYN and I are working on legal protections that our healthcare workers deserve and institutions will need if they want to return to anything reassembling normal.

On the floor, we have passed major bills, renewing key national security tools and dialing up the consequences for Communist China's abuse of human rights.

In short, the Senate has just followed the lead of the American people. For months now, healthcare workers have been clocking in to help and heal strangers. Every minute on the job is an act of selflessness and bravery. Families have forged new routines and

set up home offices and home schools overnight. Community volunteers have found new ways to pitch in and help the vulnerable from 6 feet apart.

Tens of millions of workers have kept collecting paychecks instead of pink slips because of our Paycheck Protection Program, which sent hundreds of billions of dollars to keep small businesses alive.

COVID-19 has killed nearly 100,000 Americans. It has cost tens of millions their jobs. This is a generational tragedy. But in the midst of it, our country is pulling together.

My home State of Kentucky is showing us how it is done. A glass producer transformed its operation to make protective shields for businesses. A high school principal, Evan Jackson, invented a virtual commencement so graduates didn't go uncelebrated. Dr. Erin Frazier, a pediatrician, somehow found the spare time to stand up brandnew food pantries. Restaurants are spreading hope and hospitality by donating meals to first responders.

And one group of restaurants headquartered in Louisville called Texas Roadhouse has gone to great lengths to avoid layoffs. The founder gave up his salary and put his own money into a worker assistance fund. So far they have spent \$17 million on their workers, covering everything from healthcare premiums to bonuses.

These past few months have been trying indeed, but the American people have been truly inspiring. This spring, the Senate wrote and passed the largest rescue package in American history to try to help bridge this period. This Nation of nearly 330 million people put their lives on pause to protect our medical system, and it worked.

The American people did what Americans do: They got it done. We kept our healthcare system intact; we did not let this virus break us; and as far as we know, not one single American who needed a ventilator could not get one. We have not yet won the war, but the citizens of this Nation have won an important battle.

What comes next? Sustaining this flattened curve will take vigilance. Safely reopening schools, universities, and businesses will take care and leadership. The race for even more testing, therapeutics, and of course a vaccine will be one great national project.

Rebuilding the prosperity we had just a few months ago will be another. Life will not go right back to normal. Repairing the damage will take creativity. But the greatest country in world history will find a more sustainable middle ground.

Every one of my Senate colleagues should be proud of how we helped our Nation win this battle. Every day, our historic rescue package has continued to push out money and aid. Every day, we are working on ways to smooth the road toward reopening that lies before us.

The American people have already been heroes. It is our honor as Senators to stand with them.

#### UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—S.J. RES. 72

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the actions of the Senate with respect to S.J. Res. 72 be vitiated.

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 JOHN L. RATCLIFFE, of Texas, to be Director of National Intelligence.

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, 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.

#### CORONAVIRUS

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, one unfortunate side effect of the COVID-19 pandemic is that we have become accustomed to the recitation of grim statistics.

The United States now leads the world in the number of confirmed cases of the coronavirus with more than 1.5 million. Another 2.4 million workers filed jobless claims this week, joining the more than 38 million Americans who have applied for unemployment assistance since the crisis began.

Very soon, our country will reach another grim milestone. We are fast approaching the day when more than 100,000 American lives will be lost to COVID-19—the size of a small city erased from the map.

Speaker PELOSI and I sent a letter to President Trump this morning, requesting that the American flag be flown at half-mast on all public buildings on the day the toll reaches 100,000. As families all across this great country mourn the loss of friends, colleagues, and loved ones, flying the flag

at half-mast would be a national expression of grief.

Of course, this weekend is also Memorial Day, when we commemorate the so many Americans who, through the centuries, have lost their lives for our country, and we never forget them. We never forget them. I hope, on Memorial Day, every American will take a minute amidst this crisis to remember our veterans who have served and made great sacrifice and to remember their families as well.

Now, in a flash, this disease has washed over our country like a flood, changing nearly every aspect of American society except, perhaps, the Republican Senate. If you looked at our activity in the last 3 weeks, you would hardly know that there was a COVID crisis.

Leader MCCONNELL called the Senate back into session 3 weeks ago. In that time, the Republican leadership has not put one bill on the floor of the Senate related to COVID-19—not one vote on legislation having to do with COVID-19 in the entire month of May.

The House has not been in regular session, but it has voted on many more COVID-related bills this month than the Republican Senate. For Leader MCCONNELL to say that the Senate is working and the House is derelict is the opposite of what happened.

The House has passed a major bill dealing with COVID. We have done nothing on this floor to vote on anything about COVID.

For Leader MCCONNELL to think we are doing our job by voting for some rightwing judges, by engaging in some sort of show trials to go to pursue conspiracy theories from the far right and even from Russia to besmirch political opponents past and present—that is not what we should be doing.

When Americans look at what the House has done over the last 3 weeks and what the Senate has done over the last 3 weeks, they will see that the House has done far more on COVID than the Senate because Leader MCCONNELL is not allowing the Senate to focus on the issues we should be focusing on.

What little business we have done related to the crisis—oversight hearings in a few committees—required weeks of pressure from Senate Democrats. We had to push and push and push our colleagues to even fulfill their most basic responsibilities to do a hearing, to do oversight as to whether the money that we passed weeks ago is being spent properly.

In the interest of making incremental progress—just incremental progress—Democrats have asked this Chamber to consent to smaller measures related to our relief efforts. We asked our colleagues to increase transparency in the small business lending program. We asked to release the unedited CDC guidance to help families, States, businesses, and schools reopen safely. Senate Republicans blocked those ideas.

The inaction by Senate Republicans has gotten so bad that even one of my colleagues on the other side doesn't want to adjourn today because his party has done nothing on the coronavirus for an entire month.

Leader MCCONNELL has long presided over a legislative graveyard, but in this time of national crisis, when Americans all across the country are desperate for relief, the inaction of Senate Republicans is staggering.

Making matters worse, Republicans aren't just ignoring the coronavirus; they are practically sprinting toward focusing on a partisan election instead of our coming together and trying to solve this problem.

Instead of debating COVID-related legislation on the floor, Leader MCCONNELL has asked the Senate to confirm some rightwing judges. In the Homeland Security Committee, the Republican chairman convened a hearing that slanders the family of the President's political opponent with conspiracy theories invented by none other than the Kremlin. The Homeland Security Committee should be holding hearings with the FEMA Administrator about the alarming shortage of PPE. But, instead, the Republican majority is busy following breadcrumbs left by Putin and his intelligence services. What a disgrace, what a sham, and what a dereliction of duties.

The House—again, they are doing their job. They passed a major bill. Senator MCCONNELL says: Let's wait. Let's pause. He doesn't see immediate urgency. Well, Americans do.

In the Judiciary Committee now, the Republican chairman wants to issue a bonanza of subpoenas about yet another conspiracy theory related to the 2016 elections in the hopes of diving down as many rabbit holes as can be found.

And today, in the Foreign Relations Committee, the Republican chairman is holding an audio-only hearing to advance President Trump's handpicked nominee for the Voice of America, a nominee who is currently under investigation by the attorney general of Washington, DC. That is right. The Republican majority of the Foreign Relations Committee is turning the cameras off so that the press and the public can't see what they are doing—giving a promotion to Steve Bannon's business partner in the middle of a health crisis. This is such a gross misuse of power by the majority.

While unemployment reaches astronomic levels, the Senate Republican caucus is off on a wild goose chase. The conspiracy caucus is back with a vengeance. That is the name of this Republican Senate majority: the "conspiracy caucus." That is where their zeal is; that is where their focus is—not on eradicating COVID, not on helping people get back to work, not on feeding hungry families but on pursuing conspiracy theories. Wow.

The Memorial Day weekend in a State work period is usually a time for

Senators to meet with their constituents and hear their concerns. In these strange times, we will not be able to do that in person, but we will find ways to hear from the people in our States, and I expect my Republican colleagues will get an earful.

The American people should be furious about what Washington Republicans are doing in Congress and, more to the point, what they are failing to do.

As we approach a day of reckoning, more than 100,000 deaths from the coronavirus, I cannot imagine the American people are happy that Senate Republicans can't focus on coronavirus because they are too busy doing opposition research for the President's reelection campaign.

#### NOMINATION OF JOHN L. RATCLIFFE

On another matter, later today, the Senate will vote on whether to confirm Representative JOHN RATCLIFFE to serve as the Director of National Intelligence, which oversees the 17 different intelligence agencies. It is one of the most important posts that this Chamber is asked to fill. It requires someone with unimpeachable integrity, deep experience, and the independence and backbone to speak truth to power. That is what DNIs, including the previous one, Dan Coats, did.

Unfortunately, Mr. RATCLIFFE doesn't even come close to meeting that high bar. Earlier this week, I had the opportunity to speak with Congressman RATCLIFFE over the phone. I expressed my concerns that his history as a vocal defender of the President casts doubt on his qualifications and credibility.

I asked him to simply confirm the unequivocal conclusion of our 17 intelligence agencies that Putin interfered in the 2016 elections to help President Trump. He could not confirm it.

I asked him if he would commit to basic, specific steps to improve transparency and communications between DNI and Congress—for instance, that every 2 weeks the staffs of the Gang of 8 be briefed by the DNI on what is happening in terms of election interference, that immediately Congress be notified if Russia or another foreign country attempts to interfere in our election. I asked him to do that within 72 hours. In neither case would he commit. That is not the kind of DNI we need.

So Congressman RATCLIFFE did little to address my concerns about his nomination, and I will vehemently oppose his nomination today. More than ever, we need the right person to serve as DNI. Over the past few months we have watched President Trump try to short circuit nearly every measure of independence and accountability within the executive branch.

By baselessly firing one inspector general after another, President Trump has shown he will not tolerate anyone