

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

standing up to his personal political interests, right or wrong. This is a dangerous pattern that should send a shiver down the spine of anyone who believes in democracy and is particularly relevant to the intelligence community, which must be able to inform the President of difficult truths.

Mr. RATCLIFFE, unfortunately, has not demonstrated the qualities nor the independence that we should expect of the next leader of the intelligence community. I will vote no and encourage my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, for the sake of the independence and strength of our intelligence community, which has served us so well for decades, to join me in voting no.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota.

SENATE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, the minority leader just got up and attacked the Senate for not doing anything and then proceeded to announce that we are going to be voting today on the Director of National Intelligence. It seems like a pretty important position—the person who is in charge of all the intelligence activities that we conduct around the world to make sure that we keep our country safe.

So if the Senate is here and not doing anything, it seems like a real contradiction to suggest that we are actually going to vote today on a position that is important to America's national security interests.

It is just one of many that we are going to be voting on and have been voting on over the past several weeks.

The other thing the Democrat leader forgot to acknowledge is that last week we passed reforms to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, a piece of legislation that is also important to national security, that authorizes and funds all our intelligence activities and also included reforms—reforms that many in this body on both sides of the aisle wanted to see adopted. That was an important piece of legislation and one that I think has tremendous consequences—I would add grave consequences—for the United States of America and our national security interests.

The Senate has also been very involved—I would suspect maybe to the Democratic leader's chagrin—in examining and looking at all the coronavirus legislation that we have already passed and the impact it is having and whether it is being effective and where we need to do more and where we need to fix things or refine or tweak things in a way to make those programs that we funded and authorized work better.

But to suggest that the Senate hasn't done anything on the coronavirus—really? Really? My gosh, we passed four bills—four bills—totaling almost \$3 trillion through the U.S. Senate, through the House of Representatives, on the President's desk, and signed into law—\$3 trillion, four pieces of leg-

islation, and it was done in a bipartisan way. Democrats and Republicans cooperated because it is important to our country to make sure that we are responding to an enormous crisis, an extraordinary crisis that required an extraordinary response, and the response, I would argue, has been extraordinary.

Never in my lifetime or certainly my time in the Senate—or, for that matter, I would argue anybody else's time in the Senate—has the U.S. Senate done anything of that scale, scope, or consequence. And in many of those programs that we authorized and funded, those four pieces of legislation which passed as recently as a couple of months ago, the dollars are still getting out there. They are in the pipeline. They are going out to State and local governments. They are going out to healthcare providers, hospitals, nursing homes. They are going out to small businesses. They are going out to workers, employees, people who have been unemployed through the unemployment insurance program. There are a lot of dollars in the pipeline, a lot of resources that have been expended by the U.S. Senate, the House of Representatives, and signed into law by the President.

So it seems logical, I would think, for us, as stewards of the tax dollars, as representatives of the people of this country, as policymakers, to make sure that the policies we are putting into place are having the desired effect and are actually working.

So what has the Senate been doing for the past 3 weeks? Well, exactly that—taking a look on a committee-by-committee basis at whether some of the things we have already done are being effective.

The Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee had in the head of the CDC, the head of the NIH—two critical agencies when it comes to fighting the health emergency of this country—to determine and to ask them questions about what is working, what is not working, what have we done, what should we be doing differently, what can we do.

That was a hearing the Health Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee had last week, widely participated in by Members on both sides of the aisle.

I sit on the Senate Commerce Committee. We have had several hearings. We had a markup yesterday. We marked up 14 bills yesterday, but we also have been looking at the impact of coronavirus legislation on those constituencies that are under the jurisdiction of the Senate Commerce Committee, one of which is the airline industry. We had a hearing examining the impact of the coronavirus on aviation, the airline industry in this country, and on things that we have done to help assist and support the airline industry in this country. That was another thing that the Commerce Committee did.

Then, more recently than that, we had a hearing on broadband,

connectivity, and the way in which people, through the coronavirus, are able to stay connected, the way business is conducted, and actually, frankly, for that matter, the way government is conducted because, obviously, we are doing a lot of things through connectivity as well.

We looked at what is working, what is not working, and are there areas, in terms of making sure that parts of the country that don't have high-speed internet services and that don't have broadband services could be better connected, and is that something that ought to be a part of any future legislation that we look at.

This week, the Banking Committee had the Chairman of the Federal Reserve Board and had the Secretary of the Treasury in front of that committee to ask them questions about what is happening in the financial services industry and what is the effect of all the money that we spent, that we put out the door, how is that working out there, and, again, what can we be doing differently, how can we improve, and how can we do this better as we look to the future.

Those are just three committees, off the top of my head, not to mention the fact that the Banking Committee is also reporting out the nominee to be the inspector general for the pandemic—a very important position, I might add. So they have been very active and very busy doing oversight work with respect to this pandemic.

What the Democratic leader just said is not true. It is not true; it is not accurate; and, frankly, I would think, in the eyes of the American people, it is illogical to say that we have spent \$3 trillion and we wouldn't want to take a look to see how that \$3 trillion is being spent and whether it is being effective and whether it is being efficient and then look at where do we need to do more before we rush headlong in there and just push another \$3 trillion out the door. I think that is a rational way of looking at things. I think most of the American people would accept and believe that these are—this is what we were elected to do. They want to make sure we are taking their tax dollars and spending them as wisely and well as possible and in an efficient and effective way.

By the way, just as a reminder to my colleagues, every dollar—every dollar that we spend is borrowed from our children and grandchildren. This doesn't just magically appear out of thin air. We are borrowing money. Now, granted, it is money we needed to borrow, particularly with what we have already done. Everybody acknowledges we had a crisis. We had to put out the fire, and we have been doing that.

Every dollar, prospectively, every dollar we have already spent is a borrowed dollar, borrowed from future generations of Americans, and they are dollars that someday we are going to have to repay. Wouldn't it be prudent, wouldn't it be logical, and wouldn't it