

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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 legislative clerk read the nomination of James Ray Knepp II, of Ohio, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of Ohio.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I see the majority leader on the floor, and while I have the floor, of course, as a matter of courtesy, I will yield to him if he has some comments he wants to make and ask that I then be recognized.

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

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, before I do yield, I understand Senator SCHUMER is coming. So I will yield the floor to accommodate our two leaders, but then I would ask I be recognized.

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

ELECTIONS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, last week record numbers of Americans exercised the right which generations risked everything to hand on to us. I want to spend a few minutes this morning talking about what we saw last week, where we are now, and where our great country will go from here.

There is one aspect of last week that has gotten lost that I want to single out right at the start. By every indication, the 2020 election appears to be have been free from meaningful foreign interference. There is no suggestion that our foreign adversaries were allowed to undermine the integrity of our process.

According to the Director of the Cyber Security and Infrastructure Se-

curity Administration, “we have no”—no—“evidence any foreign adversary was capable of preventing Americans from voting or changing vote tallies.”

GEN Paul Nakasone, the head of the NSA and U.S. Cyber Command reported Tuesday night, “The actions we have taken against adversaries . . . have ensured they’re not going to interfere in our elections.”

The Trump administration and the Senate spent 4 years supporting the State and local election authorities on the frontlines: new tools and information-sharing partnerships; unprecedented coordination; hundreds of millions in new funding; new, painful consequences for bad actors, like Russia, if they interfere.

The absence of any reports of foreign interference is a ringing endorsement—a ringing endorsement—of our bipartisan work, and it slams the door on the embarrassing, irresponsible rhetoric that some Washington Democrats spent 4 years broadcasting.

Too many voices tried to talk down our progress, urged Americans actually not to have confidence, and smeared anyone as unpatriotic who opposed far-left proposals to rewrite election laws.

Well, the people who pushed this hysteria could not have more egg on their face than they do right now. None of their demands became law—none of them. The Speaker of the House did not get to personally rewrite election law. And yet, because of the sensible, bipartisan steps that some of us championed, our defenses and counter-measures proved to be in radically better shape than back in 2016.

So let’s talk about where we are now. According to preliminary results, voters across the Nation elected and re-elected Republican Senators to a degree that actually stunned prognosticators. Likewise, the American people seemed to have reacted to House Democrats’ radicalism and obstruction by shrinking the Speaker’s majority and electing more Republicans.

And then there is the Presidential race. Obviously, no States have yet certified their election results. We have at least one or two States that are already on track for a recount, and I believe the President may have legal challenges underway in at least five States.

The core principle here is not complicated. In the United States of America, all legal ballots must be counted, any illegal ballots must not be counted, the process should be transparent or observable by all sides, and the courts are here to work through concerns.

Our institutions are actually built for this. We have the system in place to consider concerns, and President Trump is 100 percent within his rights to look into allegations of irregularities and weigh his legal options.

Let’s go back 20 years ago. Twenty years ago, when Florida came down to a very thin margin, we saw Vice President Gore exhaust the legal system and wait to concede until December.

More recently, weeks after the media had “called” President Bush’s reelection in 2004, Democrats baselessly disputed Ohio’s electors and delayed the process here in Congress.

In 2016 election laws saw recounts or legal challenges in several States.

If any major irregularities occurred this time of a magnitude that would affect the outcome, then every single American should want them to be brought to light. And if the Democrats feel confident they have not occurred, they should have no reason to fear any extra scrutiny.

We have the tools and institutions we need to address any concerns. The President has every right to look into allegations and to request recounts under the law, and, notably, the Constitution gives no role in this process to wealthy media corporations.

The projections and commentary of the press do not get veto power over the legal rights of any citizen, including the President of the United States.

Now, more broadly, let’s not have any lectures—no lectures—about how the President should immediately, cheerfully accept preliminary election results, from the same characters who just spent 4 years refusing to accept the validity of the last election, and who insinuated that this one would be illegitimate too, if they lost again—only if they lost. So let’s have no lectures on this subject from that contingent.

In late August, Secretary Hillary Clinton said: “Joe Biden should not concede under any circumstances . . . I think this is going to drag out, and . . . he will win it if we don’t give an inch.”

That same month, Speaker PELOSI and the Democratic leader both stated: “[President Trump] needs to cheat to win.”

In October, when Speaker PELOSI was shopping some conspiracy theory about the Postal Service, she recklessly said—listen to this: “I have no doubt that the president . . . will lie, cheat, and steal, to win this election.”

Now, does this sound like the chorus that has any credibility whatsoever to say a few legal challenges from President Trump represent some kind of crisis?

At this time last week, small business owners in cities across America were boarding up their windows in case President Trump appeared to win and far-left mobs decided to reprise their summer rioting.

Suffice it to say, a few legal inquiries from the President do not exactly spell the end of the Republic.

Here is how two professors from Fordham Law School and New York Law School put it: “For centuries, we have asked people who are unhappy with their fellow citizens or government agencies and institutions to bring their claims to court.” President Trump’s is “a traditional response that affirms rather than undermines American institutions.”

This process will reach its resolution. Our system will resolve any recounts

or litigation. In January, the winner of this election will place his hand on a Bible, just like it has happened every 4 years since 1793.

What we know for sure is that the outcome is guaranteed to delight tens of millions of Americans and disappoint tens of millions of Americans. But we also know that we will wake up on January 21, still blessed to live in the greatest Nation the world has ever seen. And in no small part, that is because we respect the rule of law, we trust our institutions, and neither of those things is outweighed by pronouncements from partisans or the press.

CORONAVIRUS

Now, on an entirely different matter, Mr. President. The last several days have brought huge good news in our fight to beat this terrible virus.

This morning, one drug manufacturer announced that ongoing trials suggest their candidate for a COVID-19 vaccine may be more than 90 percent effective—90 percent effective.

This is a huge testament to the ingenuity of the American private sector and their global partners and to the historic efforts of Congress and the Trump administration. We flattened regulatory roadblocks, we sped up trials, and laid ground work to buy and distribute a vaccine as fast as possible.

Last week, we learned the unemployment rate has fallen to 6.9 percent—6.9 percent—with more than 630,000 new jobs added just in the month of October. Now, remember back in the springtime, many experts estimated we would still be saddled with double-digit joblessness through the end of this year. It turns out the news is a whole lot better, another testament to the strong economic foundations that Congress and the Trump administration spent 3 years laying before the pandemic struck and most of all to the resilience—the incredible resilience of the American people.

So, to be clear, our work is not finished. Too many Americans are still suffering economically, and infections are climbing across the country. We cannot give up on commonsense measures like wearing masks just because we have grown tired of them.

The Senate is going to have a busy few weeks. I hope our Democratic colleagues will finally put aside their all-or-nothing obstruction and let the targeted pandemic relief—targeted pandemic relief is what we need—let it move forward.

In any event, we will need to fund the government, reach agreement with the House on the National Defense Authorization Act, and confirm more thoroughly qualified nominees.

So I welcome all my colleagues back to the Chamber, and I look forward to finishing this year strong. Our States and our country are counting on us.

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. 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.

2020 ELECTIONS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, last Tuesday, our country conducted the most sacred process in our democratic system of government, a national election.

It was an election unlike any other in modern history. Much of the voting was done before election day itself, as the global pandemic forced States to adjust their balloting and voting procedures. The counting of the vote took a little longer than most Americans might have expected or hoped. Indeed, some of the final tabulations are not yet complete. It is still to be determined which party will hold the majority in this Chamber.

But we do know a few things. First and most importantly, former Vice President Joseph Robinette Biden will become the 46th President of the United States. Our dear colleague, the distinguished Senator from California, KAMALA HARRIS, will be the next Vice President of the United States. And on January 20, the country will finally—finally—turn the page on one of the most divisive and chaotic chapters in our history.

President-Elect Joe Biden has told the country that it is time to come together and heal, to unify once again to fight not our political opponents but our common enemies: disease and poverty and injustice. There is no person better suited to the task than the former Vice President. He will be a great President for all Americans.

Vice President-Elect HARRIS, meanwhile, has just made history four times over. She will be the first African-American woman, the first Asian-American woman, the first biracial woman, and the first woman, period, to ever serve as Vice President of the United States.

I congratulate the former Vice President, his wife Jill, our colleague Senator HARRIS, and her husband Doug on their hard-fought victory.

More Americans voted for President-Elect Biden and Vice President-Elect HARRIS than any ticket in our Nation's history. They have given them an enormous burden and a decisive mandate to take the reins of the executive branch and marshal this government into action—for they will assume the high offices of the Presidency and the Vice Presidency at a time of unprecedented challenge.

Our great Nation faces the greatest economic crisis in 75 years and the greatest public health crisis in a century. Extraordinary inequalities of wealth and income strike at the heart of the idea of America as a land of equal opportunity. Racial disparities in our society strike at the heart of the

idea of America as a place of equal justice. Climate change threatens the very future of our planet.

The American people have placed their faith in President-Elect Biden to confront those challenges head-on: to relieve their suffering, to repair our democracy, to recover our economy, and rebuild the country and a planet for this generation and for the next. I have no doubt their faith will be rewarded, but I also have no doubt that the task ahead is daunting.

CORONAVIRUS

While the country prepares for a change in administration, it must also brace for the darkest days of the COVID-19 pandemic. Over the weekend, the United States recorded its 10 millionth case. We are now confirming nearly 100,000 new cases of COVID per day, on track to eclipse more than a million cases per week.

As exhausted and impatient as we all are for our lives and livelihoods to return to normal, experts are warning us that the worst phase is still ahead. The quickest way to turn the tide, crush the virus, and get back to normal is to do what we should have been doing all along: take the virus seriously, listen to the scientists, and dedicate the necessary resources to get the job done.

President-Elect Biden is already preparing to do just that. Today, he named several health experts and scientific advisers to serve on a COVID-19 task force. It sends the right signal that while the President-elect will not assume office for another few months, his administration will hit the ground running, and its policy on COVID-19 will refreshingly be dictated by facts and by science.

It is a major turning point that soon we will have an administration that actually acknowledges that this is a healthcare crisis; that knows our economy won't fully recover until we solve it. I am confident that a Biden administration will do that, but Congress must play its part too.

Nearly 15 million Americans have lost health insurance through their employer. Democrats have a solution to that problem. Let's get it done and make sure those families have health coverage.

Medicaid Programs across the country are experiencing a huge influx of new enrollees, while State budgets struggle to bear the added costs. The Heroes Act ensures that Medicaid is strengthened and secured for the duration of this pandemic. Let's get that done too.

And today, we received news that the entire world has been waiting for. A U.S. company has developed a vaccine for COVID-19 that, according to the preliminary research and the news reports, is 90 percent effective. The FDA said it would approve a vaccine that was 50 percent effective. So while the FDA needs to review the vaccine, to have a vaccine that is 90 percent effective is about as good as it gets.

We Democrats will do everything we can to make sure this vaccine or any