

seek to exploit the period of uncertainty. All of this highlights the need for continued sober and steady leadership at the Department.

BURMA

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, now on an entirely different matter, as we continue to complete the process of our own election here at home, there is also news on the continued growth of democracy half a world away.

My colleagues know that I have had a special interest in the democratic aspirations of the people of Burma for decades, dating back to my days leading the Appropriations Subcommittee for State and Foreign Operations.

Burma held elections on Sunday, which we hope will represent another step toward a more democratic and prosperous future. For too long, the people of Burma were denied democracy by a brutal military junta. To this day, its influence remains a significant impediment to progress. And as with many new democracies, the elections faced many challenges, ranging from continued conflict to the coronavirus pandemic.

But when the votes are counted and Burma's next government is seated, more hard work will await. The government will need to continue advancing Burma's democratic development. Its sovereignty must be defended against the corrupting foreign influence of the People's Republic of China. The nation needs true national reconciliation among Burma's various ethnic groups and further economic reforms to benefit all of its people.

Further progress will take real compromise and real sacrifice from parties and interests within Burma, and it will need continued support from the international community, particularly the United States.

I have known Daw Suu for many years and know she remains committed to democracy. So I hope and expect that if she and her party are the victors, her government will seek much needed constitutional, economic, and security sector reforms to further limit the corrosive influence of the military and the crony networks over so much of the life in Burma.

We are talking about a nation that still reserves 25 percent of the seats in the Parliament for the military itself. It would be an understatement to call that an obstacle toward an ongoing democratic transition.

Further progress toward democracy and prosperity in Burma will require the inclusion of Burma's ethnic minorities and making compromises with them. It will require national reconciliation to end the disparate civil conflicts that rage across that country. And it will require accountability for atrocities that have been committed by the military—and not just in Rakhine State.

If Burma's Government meaningfully pursues these kinds of efforts, I expect

the United States and like-minded countries will continue to stand by them. The free nations of the world have much to gain from Burma's democratization, and we have much to lose if it slides back into authoritarianism or further into the grasp and orbit of China.

So, as Americans, our political contests here at home can feel intense. We think our elections are charged and contentious. But when you look at democracies that are just getting off the ground around the world, you remember how blessed we are to live in a republic that has for centuries inspired the forces of democracy and freedom all around the world.

We get to live in a country where our institutions of self-government have held up for more than 230 years, where the rule of law and our Constitution are paramount.

May we never take it for granted, and may we continue to support those around the world who seek to emulate our example.

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.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, on January 20, the Biden-Harris administration will begin its work with a mandate secured by the largest number of votes ever received by a Presidential ticket in American history. Its task, of course, will be daunting. The darkest days of the COVID-19 pandemic are, unfortunately, ahead of us. More than 100,000 Americans are being diagnosed with COVID-19 a day, and more than 1,000 Americans are dying.

Soon, thankfully, we will have an administration that actually acknowledges this healthcare crisis—an administration that takes its job seriously and that will listen to the counsel of scientists and doctors and work to improve the lives of all Americans, regardless of whom they voted for.

Already, the incoming administration is preparing to hit the ground running. Yesterday, the President-elect announced his COVID-19 task force, a group of the Nation's top public health experts and scientists who will advise the incoming administration on policy.

Today, Senate Democrats will receive a briefing from one of President-Elect Biden's scientific advisers, former Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy. I expect it will be the first of

many conversations about how the Senate and the incoming administration can work together to get COVID-19 under control and on the retreat, because the truth is, the executive and legislative branches are going to have to work together in the coming months to crush this virus and put our economy back on the right track.

Nearly 15 million Americans have now lost their jobs, and, by extension, many of them have lost their healthcare coverage. Medicaid enrollment has spiked across much of the country, adding new stress to State programs already beleaguered by the demands of COVID-19. Democrats have a plan, through the Heroes Act, to strengthen and secure Medicaid for the duration of the crisis.

Congress should pursue a strong, comprehensive COVID-relief bill that actually meets the needs of the American people. Yesterday, however, the Republican leader suggested the Republican majority will continue to pursue its policy of targeted relief—in other words, inadequate relief. He seemed to suggest that the development of a possible vaccine was actually a reason to pare back on aid to the American people.

Let's be very clear. Getting this country vaccinated will be a massive undertaking, and while I share in the hope that yesterday's news brings, we cannot pretend this pandemic is nearly over. Regardless of this news, it is likely the coming winter months will be the worst yet.

The Nation is suffering from the uncontrolled spread of the virus now. With hospitalizations and fatalities on the rise all across the country, hospitals and healthcare providers are again overwhelmed. Temporary morgues are, once again, sadly, being pressed into service.

We all look forward to the day when vaccination is widely available, but we do not have the luxury of waiting to grapple with the current effects of this crisis until then. We have to act now to prevent the immediate crisis that is coming this winter.

So while the incoming administration prepares to take on a resurgent COVID-19, Congress must as well. Leader MCCONNELL and Senate Republicans must come to the table in good faith and work with us on a bipartisan bill that meets the needs of all our country. The House, of course, is Democratic, and the Senate needs a bipartisan bill to pass something. We have to work in a bipartisan way, and we owe it to the American people.

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, on another matter, I don't think many of us expected President Trump to leave the Office of the Presidency with grace—a quality he has not once demonstrated during his long career in business or his very short career in public life. But the extent to which the Republican

Party is legitimizing the President's assault on our democracy is infuriating and deeply, deeply wrong.

The President is not merely bringing forward well-founded legal challenges. He is not simply taking advantage of the ability to request a recount in States where one is possible. He is declaring himself to be the winner of an election that he lost. He is claiming to win States that he lost. His legal team is filing scores of frivolous, unsubstantiated lawsuits. He is undermining faith in our elections and poisoning our democracy during one of the most delicate moments in our constitutional system, something we treasure: the peaceful transfer of power.

The President has fired the Secretary of Defense, threatening the continuity of our national security policy because he is having a temper tantrum. Not only does this put at risk a smooth transition in one of the most sensitive and critical areas of our government, it creates an opening for our adversaries to take advantage of instability and inexperience.

The current Attorney General of the United States has made a show of authorizing Federal probes into supposed election fraud, lending a veneer of false credence to the President's delusions. It violates the longstanding tradition of avoiding even the appearance of law enforcement interference in our elections. Almost immediately, Attorney General Barr's decision prompted the Chief of the Justice Department's elections branch to resign in protest.

The Government Services Administrator, GSA, has still not signed the paperwork necessary for the Biden transition team to begin its work. And here in the Senate, the Republican leader and several Republican Members are trying to give their President air cover.

Yesterday, in the same breath that Leader McCONNELL celebrated the reelection of certain Republican Senators, he declined to congratulate the winner of the Presidential election because the election results have not been officially certified. The political right seems eager to celebrate the results it approves of while delaying judgment and casting doubt on the results it doesn't. Indeed, the Republican leader could not even mention two words, "Joe Biden," who, regardless of what Republican Senators may think, will be the next President of the United States.

Two Republican Members of this Chamber have called on their own secretary of state—a fellow Republican—to resign for no other apparent reason than the fact that President Trump did not win their State. They allege the secretary of state did not deliver honest and transparent elections. That is really a stunning charge in the United States of America. That is the kind of thing you hear about in banana republics and dishonest elections. Surely, U.S. Senators would have some evidence that in the world's premier—pre-

mier—democracy an entire State's election was not conducted "honestly," as they say. Surely, you must think that those Senators have incredible, substantial, and weighty proof of such a scandalous and alarming allegation, but you would wrong. Those two Senators provided no evidence—not even a shred—to back up their claims.

Three lonely Republican Senators—three in total—have congratulated the next President and Vice President of the United States on their victory and called on the Nation to come together. The rest have been silent or outright sympathetic toward the President's completely unsubstantiated claims of election fraud.

So look, here is where we are. Every major media outlet, including FOX News, has projected that Joe Biden will be the next President of the United States, and KAMALA HARRIS will be the next Vice President of the United States—not because the media declared them to be but because more than 76 million Americans voted them into office. There has been no evidence of widespread voter fraud or any indication that results might flip in not one but several States.

The country is ready to move on from 4 years of tumultuous and incompetent administration. The institutions of our government will ensure it on January 20, no matter what the current President claims. But they cannot ensure faith in our democracy in the hearts and minds of the American people. That is a project for both parties to confer legitimacy on an election in which, yes, half the country will be disappointed but after which the entire country must pull together.

Every day that goes by without the Republican Party acknowledging and accepting the results of the election is another day Americans' faith in our democracy declines.

VETERANS DAY

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, finally, on Veterans Day, tomorrow, we will all proudly observe Veterans Day, a chance to honor our veterans—heroes who come from every walk of life, every color and creed, joined by a common love of country and an uncommon love for their fellow Americans. This week, we say again thank you, thank you, thank you to every veteran for their service.

Like so many things this year, Veterans Day will be different. We cannot come together as we would normally do. We hold in our thoughts and prayers the veterans across the United States whose lives have been touched by this awful disease, and we give special thanks to many veterans who work as teachers, healthcare workers, doctors, nurses, and community leaders—the very heroes, in a different sense, who are keeping our communities going during these tough times. We in the Senate have a solemn responsibility to make sure they continue to get the help they need.

Finally, it is always a little different when we observe a Veterans Day in the aftermath of an election. We must never forget our freedoms—to speak freely, to assemble peaceably, to choose our leaders, and forge our destiny—have been secured, time and time again, by the sacrifice of Americans who have worn the uniform.

I yield the floor.

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

RECESS

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

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:37 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mrs. CAPITO).

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

VOTE ON KNEPP NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Knepp nomination?

Mr. CRAPO. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER), the Senator from Missouri (Mr. HAWLEY), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN), and the Senator from Alaska (Mr. SUL-LIVAN), and the Senator from Indiana (Mr. YOUNG).

Further, if present and voting the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER) would have voted "yea."

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Washington (Ms. CANTWELL), the Senator from California