

leader of the free world—are the same kind of nonsense claims that petty dictators use to deny citizens democracy and the peaceful transfers of power. One need only look at Belarus, at the moment, for a timely comparison. America is the country that stands against these kinds of undemocratic attempts at power around the world, not a nation that cowers in fear.

Leader MCCONNELL has compared President Trump's refusal to accept the election results to the delay in determining the winner of the 2000 election, which sounds right until you look at the facts. He is wrong. The comparison is wrong. The 2000 election between President Bush and former Vice President Gore ultimately came down to a difference of not 5 million votes but 537 votes in one State—Florida—not tens of thousands of votes in many States. Even Republican attorney and elections expert Ben Ginsberg rejects the comparison. He ought to know. Ginsberg was part of the team that led President Bush's recount effort in 2000.

The refusal by President Trump and some around him to accept the election results is damaging faith in our elections and our democracy. The goal is clear: to undermine the legitimacy of the Biden-Harris administration even before it is sworn in. He is damaging the ability of President-Elect Biden and his team to get to work now on the deep and painful challenges we confront as a nation.

People close to President Trump tell reporters off the record that the President knows he can't win. Some say he just needs to very gradually come to accept the reality of his defeat.

Well, with all due respect, Mr. President, your duty is to preserve this democracy. Your moral obligation is to prevent unnecessary suffering and death and to defend this country.

For 4 years, Donald Trump has feasted on chaos and the discord of America. Time and time again, he has placed his own self-interest over our national interest. He has damaged the institutions of our democracy and abused his power. We shouldn't be surprised by his destructive actions on his way out, but we shouldn't tolerate them either.

It is time for Donald Trump to accept the clear results of the election and for his administration to work with President-Elect Biden's team for a successful, peaceful, productive transition of power. It is time for the President's friends, allies, and political pals to finally level with the President. It is time for a confrontation, perhaps—a moment of truth, perhaps—and to say to the President: It is over. Now be a man. Stand up, and show this Nation that we can have a peaceful transition of power. Show this Nation we are prepared to accept the will of the American people.

Subverting faith in democracy is not a winning strategy, and it should be beneath the dignity of any American President.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I was listening to our friend, the Democratic whip, and his advice to President Trump to capitulate before the recounts and before the litigation that has been filed has been finally decided. I know they would like to have him do so, but he is completely within his rights to use the existing procedures in the States and in the local jurisdictions where these elections were conducted to review the results to see if there are discrepancies.

I also know they would like to say it is just about President Trump, but more candidates other than President Trump were on the ballot. We ought to be in the position of trying to preserve every legal vote for every candidate and making sure there are no mistakes, and there is a process in place to make that happen.

I don't know what the ultimate outcome will be—I sort of have a sneaking suspicion about what the trend line looks like—but 72 million-plus people voted for President Trump and Vice President PENCE. Out of respect for them, at least, if not for the President and the Vice President themselves, we ought to let this process play itself out. There will be a peaceful transition of power. I have no doubt whatsoever.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. President, I would like to also take a second to respond to the Senator's comments about our needing to do something about this pandemic—that we need to pass another piece of legislation and that we need to collaborate with the incoming administration to make sure that we don't miss distributing this vaccine on a timely basis.

My friend from Illinois, at least on three occasions, has voted against bills that would help to facilitate the delivery of the vaccine and would ensure that small businesses and other individuals get the economic help they need during this crisis that has been through no fault of their own.

By my count, our Democratic colleagues voted against a \$1 trillion HEALS bill. They voted against two separate, more targeted pieces of legislation that totaled a half a trillion dollars each. Those are three occasions on which they voted against continuing to provide the aid that we had voted on, on a bipartisan basis, by the end of March—four bills worth \$3.8 trillion.

I could only have wished that the sort of bipartisan cooperation we saw up through and including the CARES Act in late March would have continued, but that wasn't to be. Time and again, Speaker PELOSI stood on a \$3 trillion piece of legislation that she knew had no chance of passing. Why? Because it included things like tax cuts for millionaires and billionaires in blue States. She wanted to eliminate the cap on State and local tax deductions in the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, which we passed a few years ago, and reward mil-

lionaires and billionaires, which was not exactly dealing with the virus, either its economic fallout or the public health consequences.

Then, if that weren't enough—stiff-arming every effort that we tried to undertake since March to try to pass additional relief, both from a public health and economic perspective—today, the Speaker and the Democratic leader of the Senate took the bold step—the bold step—of writing a letter to Majority Leader MCCONNELL. Man, that was a bold step to protect the public health and protect those who, through no fault of their own, find themselves out of a job or in financial distress.

Well, I have been around here long enough to know the only reason you write a letter to somebody and then release it to the press before it gets to its intended recipient is for political purposes. It is posturing. That is what we continue to see from our friends across the aisle—political posturing.

Now they are saying—I think the Vice President himself said this—unless you drop the lawsuits, you drop the efforts to review the vote and to make sure all the ballots—all the legal ballots—are correctly counted and the ballots that are not appropriate are not counted, then people will die, unless you capitulate and give up all those rights.

In the wake of these partisan efforts to defeat any meaningful, additional relief post-March, it should be held up to ridicule because that is exactly what it deserves. It is not serious. It is partisan posturing.

If the Speaker and the Democratic leader wanted to get to work on another COVID-19 bill, do you know what they could do? They could pick up the telephone. You know, they could do a Zoom call. They wouldn't even have to socially distance or wear masks. They wouldn't have to worry about that. They could do it virtually. Or, if they wanted to do it in person, then they could come over, socially distance, and do it safely.

But this is all partisan posturing. This is not about the public health of the American people. This is not about helping people who are desperately in need of additional financial assistance—the small businesses and others that continue to struggle and lay off their workforce.

If we are serious about solving this problem, then we need to work together as we did during four separate pieces of legislation, ending with the CARES Act in late March.

But ever since that time, ever since we have offered additional assistance, Speaker PELOSI has shut it down. Our Democratic colleagues have all voted against it.

If they were serious about it, they would have voted to get on the bill, offer amendments, try to make it better, and let the Senate do its job. But, no, they wanted to make things worse in the runup to the election because

one of their main arguments against President Trump was that he mishandled the COVID-19 pandemic.

I know and you know that hindsight is 20/20. We know that the public health guidance provided by the CDC has evolved over time. We have learned a lot since then. But they were more interested in the blame game to advance their political cause in the runup to the November 3 election than they were in actually trying to help the very people who sent us here to represent them, and I think it is just shameful.

TERRORISM

On another matter, over the last 4 years, our country has made serious progress in the decades-long fight against terrorism and to lay the foundation for peace and stability in the Middle East.

We have virtually wiped out the ISIS caliphate, which was the most recent manifestation of this poisonous ideology embraced by al-Qaida that led to the attacks on 9/11. We have brought down high-ranking terrorists like al-Baghdadi, and we have eliminated the head of the Quds Force, the IRGC in Iran, that is the No. 1 state sponsor of terrorism in the world—Mr. Soleimani.

We have actually strengthened our relationship with allies in the region, like Israel and Jordan, and taken a tougher approach on a unified basis against enemies like Iran. And the recent Abraham Accords Peace Agreement marked a historic step in normalizing relations between Israel and the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain.

There is no question in my mind that the world is safer today than it was 4 years ago because of the historic progress that we have made, not only against terrorists but to provide the foundation of peace and stability in the Middle East by encouraging Israel and its neighbors to work together where they can.

But our job is not finished. Dangerous and destabilizing forces still remain, and America's military continues to play a vital role.

I personally appreciated General Mattis's doctrine of fighting terrorists by, with, and through our allies on the ground. That meant that we didn't need to put hundreds of thousands of American soldiers and marines, Special Forces on the ground. We could work through and with our allies, and that was largely successful at eliminating the ISIS threat in the Middle East.

So I was alarmed by Acting Secretary of Defense Christopher Miller's announcement today that without any real consultation either with our allies at NATO or elsewhere—certainly not with Congress—the Pentagon plans to withdraw troops from Afghanistan and Iraq to a potentially unstable and dangerous level.

I happen to be a member of the Senate Intelligence Committee, and one of the things our military does in forward-deployed locations like the Middle East is provide enabling and force

protection for our intelligence officers, who quietly work without any particular attention, hopefully. That is the nature of their work. But they need the military to be there to provide that force protection if they need it to enable their important work.

So a precipitous retreat, which would reverse the progress we have made and fought so hard to make, I think, is deeply troubling.

If we have learned one thing, it is about—maybe you call it the—I don't know if you call it the physics of military conflict or leadership, but history has taught us that power vacuums are not often filled by the good guys. It is the tyrants, it is the thugs, it is the dictators, it is the terrorists who fill those power vacuums, and if we mistakenly, even with the best of intentions, create a power vacuum, we could see once again the rise of ISIS like we saw with President Obama's premature withdrawal from Iraq.

We simply need to learn from our experience and not make the same mistake again. A precipitous withdrawal would not empower our allies. Indeed, we have heard from some of those allies. For example, NATO—the North Atlantic Treaty Organization—has a significant number of troops in these areas that are providing training and support for our friends on the ground.

It could well give rise to an opportunity for our adversaries—to the terrorists and insurgents who would love nothing more than to see American troops packing their bags so they could claim that they have defeated the Great Satan, as some of them have referred to it.

We would also, I think, cause our allies to question our reliability, while unintentionally, perhaps, emboldening our enemies and jeopardizing the lives of civilians in the region.

So I think we need to have a conversation here. We need to have a consultation. We need to get the military leaders before the appropriate committees in the Senate so that we can ask questions and understand the process and what the end goal is, particularly this close to the close of this administration's current term of office.

I understand the desire to bring our troops home. But in doing so, we can't undermine the gains that they and thousands of other brave Americans have made in the fight against terrorism and those who would do us harm.

E-CIGARETTES

Mr. President, on another matter, I have said here on the Senate floor many times over the last several months that COVID-19 is the most urgent threat facing our country right now. But as I just got through saying, it is not the only one.

Both here and abroad, the same threats and challenges that existed before COVID-19 are still with us and may have been exaggerated by the current crisis. I spoke about one example here on the Senate floor yesterday—

the strain on mental health resources. The stresses this virus are taking on our people—on the American people—are serious, as many cope with isolation, health anxieties, job losses, and financial struggles.

We are seeing a correlation with another health crisis that has been exacerbated by COVID-19. Last fall, one of the biggest health threats making headlines was the nationwide use of e-cigarettes by our young people. Folks of all ages were experiencing a range of mysterious medical conditions linked to these devices, with vaping-related injuries reported in all 50 States. What is most concerning to me is that most of those affected were otherwise healthy children and teens.

I met one of those teenagers in Fort Worth last December when I visited the University of North Texas Health Science Center for a roundtable discussion on the use of e-cigarettes. Sixteen-year-old Anna Carey was one of the many students at her high school who became addicted to e-cigarettes. She started to see symptoms that are uncommon for an otherwise healthy teenager. She was extremely lethargic and would experience random and severe pains in her chest.

Two initial x rays came back clear, so doctors released her, but she continued to struggle. Eventually, she was admitted to Cook Children's Hospital and diagnosed with chemical-induced pneumonia in both of her lungs.

Well, I am glad to report that Anna has now fully recovered and is using her story to encourage more teens not to go down the same path that she traveled down.

Now, with the additional public health concern of COVID-19, the need for action to prevent children and teens from using these devices could not be higher.

When it comes to the coronavirus, we know those who are older or who have underlying health conditions are most likely to experience severe cases. But there is a recent study by researchers at Stanford University School of Medicine that looked at the connection between vaping and COVID-19 among young people.

Researchers found that those who use e-cigarettes were five to seven more times likely to be diagnosed than nonusers. Dr. Bonnie Halpern-Felsher is a professor of pediatrics and the senior author of the study. She said: "Teens and young adults need to know that if you use e-cigarettes, you are likely at immediate risk of COVID-19 because you are damaging your lungs."

Now, one of the simplest and most effective ways to discourage children and teens from becoming addicted to these devices is to prevent them from even trying in the first place. But, unfortunately, our current laws make that easier said than done.

If you want to buy tobacco at a convenience store or gas station, you have to show an ID to prove you are over 18. So whether a teen is trying to buy e-