

State, to say nothing about our hospitals that are overwhelmed.

We had money in there. The Republican leader refused to even bring the bill up for a vote. I can't say why. The Republicans are in the majority. Bring it up. Have four or five amendments on both sides. Have four or five Republican amendments and four or five Democratic amendments. Vote them up or down. What are we afraid of? Why would we refuse to vote? If the Republican leader doesn't like the bill, instead of blocking it and not even having a vote on it, vote it up or down. The Republicans are in the majority. They could vote down any aid for the States that are suffering with COVID, but vote it up or down.

I have heard some Senators say: But they are nervous. Whichever way they vote, it might be uncomfortable back home. It might not be politically good for them back home.

Balderdash. The fact is that we were sent here to vote. I have voted more than any Senator in the history of this country, save one. I have cast well over 16,000 votes. If people were to go back to those votes and ask: "What were you thinking on this vote in 1978 or 1986 or 1995," I would probably look at it and say, "Hmm. In retrospect, I think I probably screwed up." Yet I was willing to vote. I was willing to vote.

When I was the key vote in the Armed Services Committee to stop the war in Vietnam, I knew that our State's largest newspaper would attack me mercilessly, and it did for months after that. It would be hard today to find anybody who would be in favor of continuing that war in Vietnam, but we had five votes in a row in the Armed Services Committee, and each one failed by one vote. I was its newest member, but I was there to vote, which is what we have to do.

I look at some of my friends on the Republican side who have joined me on some very tough votes. I don't want to embarrass the senior Senator from Texas, but he is on the floor. With regard to the Freedom of Information Act, we stood up against both Republicans and Democrats and said: No, we are standing up for the people of America, and we are going to have votes on this so they can see what their government is doing. That is what we have to go back to. We have to go back to the time when we could do that.

What I would urge of the Republican leadership is to bring up a COVID bill—a real COVID bill. Have a few amendments on both sides. Vote them up or down. If you don't like an amendment somebody has, vote against it. If you like it, vote for it. Let the American people at least have some hope that we are doing something for them.

Too many businesses are going out of business. Too many families don't know what they are going to do when the schools close. Too many small hospitals, especially in rural areas, wonder what they are going to do as COVID sweeps through. Let's give them some

hope. Let's say to the people: No, you are not going to be kicked out of your home. No, you are not going to be living in your car. We will give you money to get through this, knowing that the economy can be much stronger afterward if you do. Certainly, it is going to be much stronger for those in our labor force if they are still in their homes, as the jobs open back up, than if they are homeless.

So let's do that. Let's bring it up and vote. Senator SHELBY and I have worked very, very hard on bipartisan legislation for the omnibus. We probably have, maybe, 95 to 98 percent of it agreed on. Bring it up. Then, on the 2 or 3 or 4 percent, bring votes up. Vote it up or vote it down. After all, the Republicans are in the majority. If they don't like it, vote it down, but let's get the vast bulk of it through, which is something that both Republicans and Democrats have worked together on. My staff has worked together with the Republicans' staff, and we have something we can do there. So vote it up or vote it down. Let's just vote on it.

Then let's let people leave here. Let our staffs, the people who work in the hallway, and the people who are here on the floor go where it is safe. I am glad to see the distinguished Presiding Officer has gotten over his own bout of COVID. He and everybody else here who has suffered from it have been in my prayers, but there are millions of others who are suffering from it, and in the highest number we have ever had, they are dying from it.

Let's get together. Let's do what the American people want. Let's do what we were elected to do. Let's not be afraid to vote. Don't be afraid to vote. Certainly, I may have thought long and hard about some of those 16,000 votes I have cast, but I have never been afraid to vote. I have never been afraid to vote.

I see my colleague and friend waiting for the chance to speak, so I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCOTT of Florida). The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, first, while he is still on the floor, let me say that I agree with the senior Senator from Vermont. If you don't want to vote, you probably ought to look for another line of work. Congress is a bad place to come if you don't want to actually vote and be on record.

FOREIGN ACTORS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, as America waits for the results of the 2020 election to be certified in a couple of weeks, former Vice President Joe Biden has begun to announce his picks for his Cabinet and other high-ranking positions.

Some of these nominees have close ties to investment and other consulting firms whose clients are largely unknown or who may be even the subjects of nondisclosure agreements. The

truth is that these individuals could be working on behalf of a "feel good" non-profit, a malicious foreign actor, or a large company with business before the government. The truth of the matter is, we have simply no idea what kind of business or financial relationships these individuals have with foreign powers that could influence their actions as high-ranking government officials. This goes way beyond compliance with the Foreign Agents Registration Act. This is an ethical issue. It is a conflict-of-interest issue, and Americans deserve to know if these nominees have connections or relationships that could cloud their judgment on behalf of the American people if they are confirmed.

When it comes to the business dealings of those who could serve in high-ranking government positions, full transparency is the only option. So I encourage each of these individuals, if nominated, to take an open-book approach throughout the hearings and confirmation processes. In fact, I will make a pledge here today that I will not support any nominee who doesn't provide full transparency into his work on behalf of a foreign government. I will not do it. The American people deserve to know if these or any future nominees are beholden to anything other than our national interest.

Just to make the point that this is not some imaginary or hypothetical problem, let me refer to an article that was written today in the Associated Press News, entitled: "'Mercenary' donor sold access for millions in foreign money." This is a story of a so-called elite political fundraiser, Imaad Zuberi, who, maybe not surprisingly, raised a lot of money for Hillary Clinton and President Barack Obama and who also became the top donor to the Trump Presidential Inaugural Committee. In other words, he wasn't particularly partisan. He just wanted to be close to power and be able to influence it.

Prosecutors who have now prosecuted him for a variety of violations of campaign finance laws and foreign lobbying laws have called him a mercenary political donor. His foreign entanglements were quite extensive. He lobbied as an unregistered foreign agent for at least half a dozen countries and officials, including a Ukrainian oligarch who was close to Russian President Vladimir Putin. He lobbied for countries like Turkey and Sri Lanka, among others. As I said, it really doesn't make a difference so much which country. It was the fact that he was lobbying in an undisclosed fashion, raising money for political candidates, and violating campaign finance laws for which he has now pled guilty and will be awaiting sentencing after the first of the year.

We spent a lot of the last 4 years—and, certainly, as a member of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, we spent about 3½ years—investigating Russian interference with the 2016 election. Yet, as this story makes clear,

Zuberi's story shows there are far easier ways to bend American foreign policy than by using sophisticated hacking tools or well-funded troll farms. In other words, you can do it the way he has done it, which is by violating our foreign agent registration laws, representing foreign governments and foreign interests, and hiring lobbyists and cutting out donors in a way that funnels foreign money into the American political process—unbeknownst to people like us unless it is disclosed.

Between 1966 and 2015, the Department of Justice brought just seven criminal cases for violating the law relating to registering as a foreign lobbyist, according to a 2016 inspector general's report. So this is a serious topic.

The incoming chairman of the Committee on the Judiciary, Senator GRASSLEY, and the current ranking member, Senator FEINSTEIN, and I have a bipartisan bill to reform the Foreign Agents Registration Act, but this is going to be front and center in the confirmation process for any nominee by the incoming administration, and I just think it is fair to place everybody on fair notice that full transparency is the only option.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, on another matter, the Senate has, of course, returned for a last end-of-the-year legislative dash, and we have a lot of work to do before we cross the finish line.

As we know, government funding will expire in less than 2 weeks, and we have to reach an agreement, as the senior Senator from Vermont mentioned, before the December 11 deadline of the current continuing resolution. With millions of Americans already facing economic uncertainty, a government shutdown is, surely, not an option.

We need to pass the National Defense Authorization Act to support America's brave servicemembers and ensure that our military leaders have the ability to plan and operate with certainty and provide peace through American strength. Also, as we move into the winter months, which the experts have told us will present new challenges in our war against the COVID-19 virus, it is time to cut the partisanship and deliver another round of relief to the American people.

It is worth recounting—because people have short memories, apparently, in Washington, DC—that, over the last several months, our Democratic colleagues have consistently talked about the need to bolster our support in the fight against COVID-19. Yet, despite the repeated rhetoric and calls to action, they have unapologetically stood in the way of each and every attempt to make real progress.

This summer, we proposed something called the HEALS Act—as the Presiding Officer knows, for he was instrumental in that work—as a starting

point for negotiations on a new relief package. It was a starting place, a place to begin bipartisan negotiations in the hope of crafting a package that could get the requisite number of votes. Unfortunately, before the election, our Democratic colleagues had simply no interest in amending the bill or trying to find any kind of common ground. I think they thought it was to their political advantage for the American people to be experiencing the anxiety and the pain before the election. I can't imagine holding them hostage, but that is what appeared, to me, to be the case.

Instead of trying to find common ground—in particular, the Speaker made the amazing statement that nothing was better than something when it came to COVID-19 relief, which is just the opposite of what I have always believed—she demeaned the bill of half a trillion dollars in spending as “pathetic.” The minority leader called it “unworkable,” but then they didn't lift a finger to try to get anything done.

So the next month we took another shot. We attempted to narrow the scope of negotiations to the most urgent matters—things like continuing Federal unemployment benefits, which expired at the end of July. This is last July. This time our Democratic colleagues rejected what they called a “piecemeal” approach.

Well, never mind the fact that the House returned to Washington to help pass a bill that supported the U.S. Postal Service. We all believe in supporting the Postal Service, but apparently they thought that piecemeal bill was acceptable as long as it was a Democratic-authored bill and didn't provide any additional relief to the American people.

Well, being unsuccessful those first two times, we tried again a third time. So in September the majority leader tried to bring a bill to the floor to provide \$500 billion for our shared bipartisan priorities. There weren't any real differences in what was in the bill. The only difference was that our Democratic colleagues wanted to spend multiples of that for unrelated activities. We wanted to concentrate the effort on helping small businesses keep their employees on payroll, giving schools the resources they needed to keep their students and teachers safe, strengthening testing nationwide, and investing in the continued success of Operation Warp Speed, which is going to deliver an FDA-approved vaccine before the end of the year—not just one, maybe as many as two or three, and more, perhaps, to come.

Anyone who has spent time watching C-SPAN over the last several months has heard both Republicans and Democrats talk about the importance of every single one of these things, but when legislation that includes all of these priorities came up for an initial vote, our Democratic colleagues wouldn't even allow us to get on the

bill. In other words, here in the Senate you have to vote to get on the bill before you can then offer amendments and try to make it better.

So they killed it. Without batting an eye, our Democratic colleagues voted in lockstep to block the bill and unanimously oppose legislation that would have invested an additional half-trillion dollars in our fight against COVID-19.

When the majority leader tried to bring the bill to the floor again in October, we saw exactly the same thing. It was the same bad movie all over again. Our Democratic colleagues refused to let us even debate, much less to amend, the bill.

It is not just these targeted packages that have been blocked by our Democratic colleagues. They stood in the way of our commonsense proposals, like the one from the now-former Senator from Arizona, Senator MCSALLY, which would have extended unemployment benefits for 1 week while we negotiated a larger compromise.

Our friends on the other side of the aisle have repeatedly said that Congress needs to act, but the reality is their own actions have prevented us from doing so.

Month after month, they have demonstrated it is either the House's multitrillion-dollar, leftwing-policy grab-bag wish list or nothing. They have consistently told the American people: It is our way or the highway. You don't get an extension of unemployment insurance unless we get tax breaks for blue-State millionaires and billionaires. You don't get vaccine funding unless we get diversity studies on the marijuana industry. You don't get funding for schools unless we get permanent changes to hijack and take over our election laws and run them out of Washington, DC.

Well, even rank-and-file Democrats have now understood and criticized this sort of bogus approach to legislating. It has been the same song and dance month after month—fiery speeches, press conferences, tweets, and letters calling for action. But each time our Democratic colleagues have been given an opportunity to actually do something—to do more than spout off some meaningless, vapid rhetoric at the nearest microphone—they have simply stood in the way.

The fact of the matter is our Democratic colleagues have blocked more COVID relief bills than they have passed. Yet they continue to feign outrage over Congress's failure to pass a bill—we heard it again here today—as though they aren't the ones responsible for the impasse.

Our jobs here in the Senate aren't simply to vote against imperfect bills. If that were the case, no bill would ever pass, because none of them is perfect. But this body is built on making imperfect legislation better through a debate-and-amendment process—two processes we haven't seen much at work this year.