

trade with the world. He secured the historic United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement and the bilateral tax treaties with partners in Europe and in Asia.

A nation this productive needs plenty of energy to keep it going. Fortunately, President Trump and his administration ended the ideological war on fossil fuels and hit the accelerator on “all of the above” American energy dominance. In the last 4 years, we surpassed Saudi Arabia in oil production. We saw energy exports exceed energy imports for the first year in almost 70 years. Meanwhile, we saw CO₂ emissions fall, along with other harmful pollutants. That energy independence has dramatically strengthened our hand with respect to the rest of the world, particularly the Middle East.

So speaking of the Middle East, President Trump wasted little time pulling back from the prior administration’s disastrous “Iran deal.” His team eliminated daylight between us and Israel and repaired our relationships with Arab partners. And he aligned these relationships around our common shared interests—countering threats like radical Islamic terrorists and Iranian aggression.

Under President Trump’s command, our forces took terrorist leaders like al-Baghdadi and Soleimani off the battlefield. The physical caliphate that ISIS established on the previous President’s watch was destroyed.

All of this paved the way for the Abraham accords, the historic normalization of relationships between Israel and the UAE, Bahrain, Sudan, and, most recently, Morocco. And the potential is there for more on the horizon.

Now, the Middle East isn’t the only place where the Trump administration has shored up our footing on the world stage. Our 45th Commander in Chief sought out to rebuild and modernize our military and to move our foreign policy from a chapter of weakness and apology into a renewed posture of strength.

Four years later, we have a new national defense strategy to compete with and deter adversaries like Russia and China. We have rebuilt the military and invested in new technologies to ensure America keeps our edge in everything from cyber to space, to advanced weapons system.

The President’s leadership does not stop with those who are currently serving. He also signed into law the historic VA MISSION Act to ensure our dedication to the men and women in uniform does not end when their tours conclude.

So, clearly, the list of American accomplishments since 2016 is nearly endless. There are the many miles of new protections on our southern border. At one point, apprehensions at the border hit their lowest level since the 1970s.

Essential causes, like religious liberty and the most vulnerable, the unborn, have had a champion in this administration instead of an adversary.

There have been historic new steps to conserve our national treasures, like the Great American Outdoors Act.

And perhaps most important of all, President Trump nominated—and this Senate confirmed—three outstanding Supreme Court Justices, along with more than 220 more article III Federal judges. These are brilliant, young, constitutionalist men and women in lifetime appointments who will renew the judiciary for a new generation—all because President Trump knows we need judges who respect the essential but limited job description the Framers wrote for our third branch of government.

So as you can see, it would take far more than one speech to catalogue all the major wins the Trump administration has helped deliver for the American people. The outsider who swore he would shake up Washington and lead our country to new accomplishments both at home and abroad proceeded to do exactly that.

President Trump and Vice President MIKE PENCE deserve our thanks and our gratitude for their tireless work and their essential roles in all of these victories and in many more.

2020 ELECTIONS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, 6 weeks ago, Americans voted in this year’s general election. The legal and constitutional processes have continued to play out since then.

Yesterday, electors met in all 50 States. So, as of this morning, our country has officially a President-elect and a Vice President-elect.

Many millions of us had hoped the Presidential election would yield a different result. But our system of government has processes to determine who will be sworn in on January 20.

The electoral college has spoken.

So, today, I want to congratulate President-Elect Joe Biden. The President-elect is no stranger to the Senate. He has devoted himself to public service for many years.

I also want to congratulate the Vice President-elect, our colleague from California, Senator HARRIS. Beyond our differences, all Americans can take pride that our nation has a female Vice President-elect for the very first time.

I look toward to finishing out the next 36 days strong with President Trump. Our Nation needs us to add another bipartisan chapter to this record of achievement.

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. DURBIN. Madam 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 CALENDER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume the consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Thomas L. Kirsch II, of Indiana, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Seventh Circuit.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

PRESIDENT-ELECT BIDEN

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, if you follow the U.S. Senate, which, of course, many of us do, there was a noteworthy moment this morning. It was actually a prayer by our Chaplain, Barry Black. In that prayer, he acknowledged and called for the blessings of God on the President-Elect Joe Biden and Vice President-Elect KAMALA HARRIS.

The reason that was noteworthy is that has been a contested issue among politicians on Capitol Hill for weeks as to whether or not Joe Biden could be described as President-elect. Many have stepped forward and said yes, but many resisted. The acknowledgement by the Chaplain caught me a little by surprise this morning. And I came to the floor to hear the Republican leader, Senator MCCONNELL, go through an accounting of the Trump Presidency and all of his achievements and then concluded by acknowledging as well that we have a President-elect in Joe Biden. I believe that that reflected the reality of the November 3 election and the finality of the electoral college decisions being made across the Nation in so many States.

I thank those who have stepped forward to acknowledge the reality of a new President and hope that they will join me in an effort to do our best to make certain that his tenure is a success, not just for him personally and the Vice President but for our Nation. We deserve nothing less.

It is a long story, these last few weeks since November 3 and what has happened across America. I don’t think anyone could have predicted that we would see the divisive reaction that we have seen, nor could anyone have predicted what happened yesterday. Some States had to take extraordinary measures to protect electoral college electors—what used to be a routine, somewhat tedious and boring mission. It resulted in the closing of legislative

buildings in Michigan to the public and, according to press reports, credible threats of violence. In Arizona, electors met in an undisclosed location to safely cast their votes. These measures followed a last-ditch effort by 17 Republican attorneys general and more than half of the House Republican caucus joining in a lawsuit and accompanying an amicus brief before the Supreme Court, which incredibly argued that the Court should nullify the votes of more than 20 million Americans. These ludicrous arguments couldn't hide the true justification for joining this effort to undermine our democracy. The people who were protesting simply don't like the results of the 2020 election, and they don't want to turn their backs on President Trump.

The conservative-leaning Supreme Court summarily dismissed this effort outright, rejecting the lawsuit in an order on Friday evening, wasting no time in doing it. Despite repeated and forceful judicial rejections of their baseless allegations of fraud at attempts to nullify the votes of Americans, only 27 Congressional Republicans would publicly acknowledge the obvious President-elect of the United States, Joe Biden, as of last week.

Now that the electoral college has spoken, more Congressional Republicans are finally stepping up. The fact that it took 6 weeks for my colleagues to recognize reality and stop undermining our Democratic process is sad and disappointing. When we were sworn in as Members of Congress, we took a simple oath: support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic. It is not an oath to one person, nor one President; it is not conditional if one receives enough angry phone calls; it is not dependent on whether the responsibilities are difficult; and it is certainly not optional if one has to face a more challenging electorate. And yet, with the exception of only a few in this Senate Chamber, the silence in upholding this oath in the face of President Trump's blatant attempts to undermine our democracy has been overwhelming.

Just compare it to the courage shown by State and local election officials across the United States, including many Republicans, who always hasten to add that they had voted for President Trump; they were disappointed in the election of Joe Biden; but the election in their State, by their measure, was honest and fair. They don't enjoy the perks or protections we have here in Congress, but they stepped up and spoke up, and I respect them for it—proud Americans of both parties under personal threat for their integrity and defending an American election that the President of the United States wants overturned.

Senator MURPHY, the junior Senator from Connecticut, came to the floor on Friday and spoke eloquently about this threat to American democracy that has been playing out in plain sight—

the blatant and shameful attempt to use the power of the Presidency to overturn a free and fair election, an election which is the foundation of our democracy. Senator MURPHY reminded us about the fragility of our democracy and how it should never ever be taken for granted. He warned about collaborating in silence as these efforts are made to destroy it. "How Democracies Die." The poignant remarks and the outrageous actions of recent weeks reminded me of a dinner I hosted with the authors of a powerful book, "How Democracies Die." The authors, Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt, detail examples in which democracies are weakened, collapsed, and even destroyed. I recommend it as urgent reading to my colleagues in the Senate at this moment in our history. They highlighted the critical role of established political leaders in standing up, or failing to stand up, in key moments when events or persons threaten their democracies.

Venezuela, in the early 1990s—the key establishment party leader opportunistically sided with Hugo Chavez after a coup attempt, devastatingly, giving Chavez critical legitimacy he then used to gain power and bring his country to its current state of decline. I believe we have such a moment here that demands leaders of both parties to carry out their oaths of office and defend our treasured democracy. Quite simply, silence is unacceptable.

I am glad for what Senator MCCONNELL said this morning on the floor of the Senate. Perhaps Chaplain Black inspired him and will inspire others to step up and speak the truth.

CORONAVIRUS

Madam President, on a separate issue, I have given a big part of my life to this institution, the Senate, and I respect what we have been able to do on many occasions. Through honest give-and-take and compromise, we have been able to bring legislation to this floor to debate it, to consider amendments, to pass the legislation, and, ultimately, not only make a law but change the lives of Americans. We are at that moment where we need it again. And 10 of us—5 Democrats, 5 Republicans, as well as House Members—decided 3 weeks ago that enough was enough; we needed to show some leadership and try to work out a compromise between us for another COVID relief package. You see, it has been 9 months since we passed what was known as the CARES Act on the floor of the Senate, 96 to 0—overwhelming, unanimous, bipartisan decision—to spend about \$3 trillion not only to fight the pandemic but to restore our economy.

Thank goodness we did. It really gave us an opportunity to do something for America when it desperately needed it. We thought that the threat of the pandemic would soon ebb away, but it did not. It was not gone in 6 months, and it isn't gone today. In fact, in some places in America, it is worse now than

ever. My State of Illinois, despite the heroic efforts of my Governor and many others, is suffering with infections, hospitalizations, and, sadly, too many deaths. That is the reality of where we are today.

So this group of 10—5 Democrats, 5 Republicans—has been meeting for 3 weeks. We even met on Thanksgiving Day. We did a Zoom call and had some conversation about a phase of this that might be important for us to consider. I tell you that because we did produce a work product—one that I think is worthy of consideration immediately on the floor of the Senate. It was an effort to reach a spending target of \$908 billion to provide immediate assistance across the board in the United States, to extend unemployment benefits where they are desperately needed; to give help to businesses—some \$300 billion in new lending authority; to provide additional funds for SNAP, the food stamp program, which many desperate families turn to in order to feed their children; help to our farmers; help to the renters who would be facing eviction under their leases if we were to do nothing; help to hospitals and nursing homes and clinics, for we all know they are on the frontline of this battle; money for the testing of those who suspect they are infected with COVID-19; and more resources for the logistics of vaccinations.

The CDFI Program is an effort to extend lending authority, particularly in desperate communities that are battling both poverty as well as this pandemic. There is \$5 billion for mental health, and we certainly know we need it, for the psychological pressure that America is facing is obvious in so many ways. There is over \$80 billion in education and \$10 billion in childcare. We can't overlook the fact that many can't return to work because there is no childcare that they trust with their kids. There is help, as well, for expanding broadband. As our kids have to turn to remote learning in many places in America, broadband has to become a fact of life across this Nation. There is \$45 billion in the whole transportation system network that has been devastated by this economic downturn. There is \$10 billion for those in our Postal Service. They are working harder than ever, and we want to make sure that the men and women of the Postal Service, who do such a remarkable job, know that we have their backs. There are also extensions of spending authority for the CARES Act.

These are just a few of the things that we considered over the 3-week period, and we came up with a bill that spent \$748 billion. There were two items that were not included in the base consensus bill because we couldn't reach a consensus on them.

State and local government assistance I support completely. I know what my cities and my counties and what my State have gone through. They need help. We couldn't agree on including that in the package at this moment. I hope this changes even today.