

I look forward to confirming Judge Brasher to his next post this afternoon.

WAR POWERS RESOLUTION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, on another matter, this week, we expect the Senate will take up a War Powers Resolution by the junior Senator from Virginia that would severely limit the U.S. military's operational flexibility to defend itself against threats posed by Iran. I will strongly oppose our colleague's effort and urge the Senate to defeat it.

First, let's discuss what prompted this: the President's successful decision to remove Soleimani from the battlefield last month. This limited yet decisive precision strike eliminated the terrorist mastermind who had been responsible for more American military casualties than anyone else alive.

This was not some reckless act. It was a calculated and limited response to a significant, growing threat of attack against U.S. personnel in Iraq by an emboldened adversary. Years ago, Soleimani had concluded America was a paper tiger whose people he could kill with relative impunity. It was a strike designed to stop an escalation cycle we all knew was underway and to restore deterrence and reduce the risk of war.

Yet, when Soleimani's record of brutality was brought to an end, some Washington Democrats immediately suggested President Trump was leading us into World War III. While the Middle East masses rejoiced at the death of a principal architect of Iran's campaign of terror, the Washington elites fretted.

Yet, thus far, it appears the Soleimani strike has, indeed, had the intended effect. As I observed back in January, "We appear to have restored a measure of deterrence in the Middle East. So let's not screw it up." Well, I am afraid that is just what our colleague's resolution would do. Just as we have successfully sent Iran the strong signal of our strength and resolve, a blunt and clumsy War Powers Resolution would tie our own hands.

With China's and Russia's watching, is it really a good idea to suggest that we are willing to let a meddling power like Iran push us around? This self-flagellation and self-limitation would be tantamount to snatching defeat from the jaws of victory.

For 8 years, President Obama and Senate Democrats, like my friend the Democratic leader himself, frequently said that, when it comes to Iran, we should never take the military option off the table. Yet, now that someone else is in the Oval Office, they seem to want to remove all options from the table. Lest we forget, the fact is that we are not conducting ongoing hostilities with Iran. This was a one-off operation to disrupt and deter planned attacks—not a campaign, not a conflict, not a war.

This discrete and limited exercise of American power pales in comparison to

the ways in which past Presidents of both parties have routinely used Presidential authorities to utilize our military might without their having the prior consent of Congress—President Clinton in Kosovo, President Obama in Libya, and so on.

Do most of my distinguished Democratic colleagues really agree with several of their party's leading Presidential candidates who have suggested President Trump made a mistake by taking this sort of Executive action to eliminate this brutal terrorist?

Do my colleagues really agree with the prominent voices on their side who have proposed to exit the Middle East altogether rather than to continue to work to support our local partners and defend our national security and national interests in this critical region?

I have been trying to have this broader debate for more than a year now. I have repeatedly sought to give my Democratic colleagues the opportunity to go on record about their actual, big-picture strategic vision for the Middle East.

Are they willing to support a continued military presence in Syria? in Iraq? Do they believe we can magically support our partners, like the Kurds, without having a military presence; that we can counter Iranian and Russian influence if we are nowhere to be found in the region? Do they believe Israel will be safer in a region without American influence?

Ill-conceived potshots at Presidential authorities—in the wake of a strike that succeeded—by using the blunt instrument of a War Powers Resolution is no substitute at all for answering these broader questions.

I will oppose my colleague's resolution tomorrow, and I encourage our colleagues to do likewise.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—H.R. 5687

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I understand there is a bill at the desk that is due for a second reading.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The leader is correct.

The clerk will read the title of the bill for the second time.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 5687) making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2020, and for other purposes.

Mr. MCCONNELL. In order to place the bill on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I would object to further proceedings.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection having been heard, the bill will be placed on the calendar.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, 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. Madam 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.

ELECTION SECURITY

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, the 2020 primary elections are ongoing. The national election is only 9 months away. If there is anything we can say for certain about our elections at this point, it is that foreign entities—Putin, China, perhaps others—are already implementing their schemes to undermine the public confidence and the integrity of those elections and to bend social media in favor of their chosen outcome. FBI Director Wray, former DNI Coats—virtually every member of our national security and intelligence community has warned us of this danger.

As we have heard over the past weeks, the threat of foreign interference in our election dates back to the founding days of the country. George Washington warned that foreign interference is one of the most baneful foes of republican government. Adams wrote that as long as elections happen, the danger of foreign influence recurs.

The warnings of our Founders hold a new and startling relevance today. The current President of the United States, far from having the same fears about foreign interference as our Founders, has been very public about his openness to foreign assistance and manipulation in support of his election. If a foreign power had dirt on one of his opponents, the President said, "I think I'd want to hear it." At different times, the President has invited Russia, Ukraine, and China to investigate his political opponents.

Of course the President was just impeached over this issue, and the Senate just concluded a trial in which it appeared a bipartisan majority of Senators broadly accepted the fact that the President leveraged hundreds of millions of dollars of military assistance to Ukraine to compel its government to investigate one of his political rivals.

The trial of President Trump exposed in great detail the President's willingness to accept foreign help in the elections. It also revealed just how little Senate Republicans were willing to do about it. Senate Republicans wouldn't even fairly examine the charges against the President by allowing witnesses and documents in his trial.

The end of the President's impeachment trial does not mean that the end of the issue of election security is somehow over—far from it. We now have even a greater need to safeguard our elections than we had before.

The President tried to cheat in our elections, and the Senate majority of

his party decided to look the other way. What do you think the President will conclude? He will conclude that he can get away with anything. He could try to cheat again—ask China or North Korea or Russia to investigate the Democratic nominee, whoever it is.

We know we can't trust this President to stand up for the integrity of our elections, so Congress must. Democrats are not going to stop fighting to put up additional safeguards before the 2020 elections.

Later today, a group of my colleagues will come to the floor to ask unanimous consent to pass crucial election security legislation. Much of this legislation is bipartisan. Some of it has already passed out of committee. Some of it has passed the House, but it has languished for years—years—because Majority Leader McCONNELL has refused to bring any of these bills to the floor.

Senator WARNER and Senator BLUMENTHAL have duty-to-report bills—commonsense measures to require Presidential campaigns to report offers of foreign help to the FBI. Senator WYDEN and Senator KLOBUCHAR have the SAFE Act—another commonsense measure to authorize funding to harden election infrastructure and protect voting machines from hacking and other intrusions.

Neither of these bills should be controversial. There is nothing partisan about them—nothing at all—but they have consistently been blocked by Senate Republicans and denied time and consideration on the floor by Republican Leader McCONNELL. That doesn't mean Democrats are going to stop trying. Later today, we will try again to pass these bipartisan, noncontroversial bills. We will see if our Republican colleagues are willing to do what is necessary to protect our elections.

NOMINATION OF ANDREW LYNN BRASHER

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, on the nomination of Andrew Brasher for the Eleventh Circuit, the nomination is truly a disgrace—a disgrace—to our judiciary. I urge every single Senator to reject it.

Mr. Brasher is laughably inexperienced. He was confirmed as a district court judge only 9 months ago. That is the sum total of his experience as a judge at any level—9 months. Now Leader McCONNELL wants to elevate him to an appellate court. In Leader McCONNELL's desperate rush to pack the courts with hard-right judges, his party is asking the Senate to confirm judicial novices to the most austere and important seats on the Federal bench.

Worse than this nominee's inexperience, though, are his views, which are so far outside the American mainstream.

In his 5 years as solicitor general in the State of Alabama, Brasher defended the indefensible on issues rang-

ing from women's reproductive rights, to marriage equality, to gun safety. Mr. Brasher has also amassed a career's worth of experience undermining voting rights. Brasher signed on to an amicus brief that argued in favor of gutting the Voting Rights Act—arguably the most important piece of civil rights legislation in our Nation's history. His arguments in defense of an Arizona voter ID law were roundly rejected by the Supreme Court, including Justice Scalia. As the solicitor general for Alabama, Brasher defended the State's voter suppression efforts, including State district lines that courts later concluded were drawn explicitly to discriminate against African-American voters. This is who the Senate Republicans want to put as a circuit court of appeals justice.

Whether it is covering up for President Trump and his attempts to cheat in our elections or confirming judges like Mr. Brasher with a history of race-related voter discrimination, Senate Republicans are showing outright contempt for the very wellspring of our democracy—the right of American citizens to vote in free and fair elections.

Mr. Brasher clearly, obviously, and certainly does not belong on the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals. I urge every Senator to vote against his nomination.

I yield the floor.

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. THUNE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

ECONOMIC GROWTH

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, last Tuesday, the President delivered his State of the Union Address. He discussed some of our biggest accomplishments over the past 3 years, and, of course, chief among those accomplishments is the economic progress we have made.

During the Obama administration, our economy spent years in the doldrums. American families and American workers struggled to advance in a historically slow recovery that left some experts predicting that a weaker economy would be the new normal. Yet Republicans didn't believe we should be resigning ourselves to that future. In fact, we knew that the real strength of the American economy, American business, and American workers was still there.

But we also knew that burdensome regulations and an outdated tax code were preventing our economy from thriving the way it should, so we took action. We cut burdensome regulations and passed historic reform of our Tax Code. We cut tax rates for families, doubled the tax credit, and nearly doubled the standard deduction.

Then we took aim at the parts of the Tax Code that were holding back American workers and American businesses. We lowered tax rates across the board for owners of small and medium-sized businesses, farms, and ranches. We lowered our Nation's massive corporate tax rate, which was the highest corporate tax rate in the developed world. We expanded business owners' ability to recover the costs of investments they make in their businesses, which frees up cash they can reinvest in their operations and their workers. We brought the U.S. international tax system into the 21st century so that American businesses are not operating at a competitive disadvantage next to their foreign counterparts.

Tax reform is working. Unemployment is near its lowest level in 50 years—50 years. Think about that. For the past 12 months, unemployment has been below 4 percent, a record that was last achieved in the 1960s. African Americans, Hispanic Americans and Asian Americans all saw record low unemployment in 2019. Strong economic growth has also given discouraged workers the confidence to come off of the sidelines and to join the workforce.

Currently, the labor force participation rate is at its highest level in 7 years. Last month, the economy created 225,000 jobs, well above market expectations. All told, the economy has created an average of 171,000 jobs per month over the past 12 months—a strong number.

Wages are growing. For the past 18 months, wage growth has been at or above 3 percent. And as the President said in his State of the Union Address, this is a "blue-collar boom." In contrast to the Obama administration, in this economy, it is blue-collar workers who are seeing the strong wage growth.

Gains in the stock market have been good news for American workers' 401(k)s and pensions. The list goes on.

Of course, while we have made a lot of progress, our work isn't done. While our economy as a whole has thrived, our Nation's farm economy continues to struggle. Low commodity and livestock prices, natural disasters, and protracted trade disputes have made the last few years challenging ones for farmers and ranchers.

One of the most important things we can do to help the farm economy is negotiate trade deals that expand markets for American agriculture products and give our farmers and ranchers certainty about what markets will look like going forward. That is why I pushed for passage of the United States-Mexico-Canada Trade Agreement, which the President signed last month. This agreement will maintain and expand farmers' and ranchers' access to the two biggest markets for American agricultural products and provide certainty about what these markets will look like for the foreseeable future.

I am particularly pleased about the improvements the agreement makes