

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

for the dairy industry, which is a growing industry in my State of South Dakota. We need to conclude more strong trade agreements going forward that will expand markets for American agriculture products.

The President also mentioned the trade agreement we are negotiating with China. The President recently signed phase one of the agreement, which includes a pledge from China to substantially increase its imports of American agriculture products. That is excellent news for farmers and ranchers, but we need to make sure that China actually lives up to its commitments. As we know, China doesn't have the best record in this regard, and it is important that the United States make clear that any agreements must be honored.

We have made a lot of progress for the American people over the past 3 years, but, as I said, there is more work to be done. I hope to work with my colleagues of both parties this year to continue to build on the economic progress we have made and create more opportunities for American workers. I will continue to make the needs of our Nation's farmers and ranchers one of my top priorities. I am committed to seeing our Nation's farm economy catch up to our economy as a whole.

I am proud that Republican economic policies have made life better for American workers. I will continue to work to ensure that every American has access to the benefits of our strong economy.

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 the call the roll.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. LOEFFLER). Without objection, it is so ordered.

REMEMBERING BILLIE SUE HOGGARD

Mr. COTTON. Madam President, our Nation functions thanks to the extraordinary devotion and patriotism of the American people. Every city, every county, every State, and every party has a few patriots who go above and beyond, dedicating their whole lives to making sure that our system works and that our way of life is preserved so that we can pass on our Republic as a precious inheritance to our children and our grandchildren.

Billie Sue Hoggard was just such a patriot. She devoted her life to her neighbors and fellow citizens in Jonesboro in northeast Arkansas. Billie Sue went home to be with the Lord on Sunday at age 76.

Billie Sue loved America, she loved Arkansas, she loved the Republican Party with all of her heart, and she devoted all of her energy to making them great.

As a young child, sadly, Billie Sue knew the meaning of sacrifice. Her adoptive father was killed in action during the Battle of the Bulge in World War II. Although they had not met, he kept her baby photo in his wallet. No doubt, he was proud to know the baby girl he adopted grew up to carry on his legacy of service to others. I bet he told her that on Sunday when they were reunited.

Billie Sue worked as a teacher in northeast Arkansas for decades, helping young people grow up to become better citizens. Her career as an educator was just one part of her commitment to public service. She also served as a justice of the peace and the Republican Party committee chair for Craighead County, where she brought energy and joy and a little bit of feistiness to every meeting and every local gathering.

Billie Sue was also a Republican well ahead of the pack, back in the day when many counties didn't even have committees and some counties could probably meet in a telephone booth. Her energy and commitment were instrumental in helping our party win the trust and support of our candidates in Jonesboro, in Craighead County, in northeast Arkansas, and all around our State. It is thanks in no small part to her efforts that RICK CRAWFORD now represents northeast Arkansas in the House of Representatives, the first Republican to hold that seat since reconstruction.

I met Billie Sue shortly after my election to the House. She encouraged me to run for the Senate. She promised to deliver Craighead County if I did, and I can tell you, she kept that promise and then some, as she always did.

Of course, Billie Sue was most committed of all to her family. Her four children, seven grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren were the loves of her life. In a fitting turn of fate, Billie Sue, the adopted daughter of a servicemember, served herself as guardian to two of her young granddaughters in her later years. She was in her seventies when she raised those two young girls. In an act of love, she stepped up for her family in its hour of need.

Billy Sue's health declined over the last year of her life. We all know how the battles of illness can rob people we love of their vitality in their final days. But while cancer could ravage her body, it could never dampen Billy Sue's spirit. When I called her over this last year to check on her, I always heard the same energy and passion—and, yes, feistiness—as she wanted to skip over quickly how she was doing and talk about the latest legislative battles here in Congress and political campaigns in Arkansas.

Now Billie Sue has gone back to be with the Lord, but she is not forgotten. Arkansans will remember her as a local leader and a patriot who made her community and our State better through decades of tireless service. May she rest in peace.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CRUZ). 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 CALENDAR

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

The bill clerk read the nomination of Andrew Lynn Brasher, of Alabama, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Eleventh Circuit.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader.

ELECTION SECURITY

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, the 2020 primary elections are already underway, and the national election is only 9 months away. We know that foreign entities—Putin, China, perhaps others—are already scheming to undermine the public confidence in our elections. The threats to our next elections are real and growing nearer each day.

Last week the Senate concluded an impeachment trial of the President, who was accused of abusing the powers of his office to solicit the help of a foreign power in his reelection—solicit the help. It didn't just happen. He was soliciting it.

My Republican Senate friends refused to hold the President accountable for his misconduct—refused to even hold a fair trial. Now, what do we think the President will conclude after the Senate Republican majority let him off the hook for trying to cheat in our elections? He will conclude that he can try to do it again. Anyone who knows him knows that is what he will do.

Because Senate Republicans chose to look the other way, the need for election security legislation is greater now than ever before. We cannot trust this President to stand up for the integrity of our elections. So Congress must stand up in his stead.

In a few moments, my colleagues Senator WARNER, Senator WYDEN, and