

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I heard the Republican leader on the floor just moments ago talking about the dismissal of some individuals by the Biden administration and their replacement, and his complaint that this violated the norms and the precedents of the U.S. Senate.

There are certainly two words I would offer in response to that assertion: Merrick Garland.

I would offer those words to the Republican leader as a reminder of what he did when there was a vacancy on the highest Court in the land, the U.S. Supreme Court. Antonin Scalia passed away, and a vacancy occurred. It was the last year of the Obama administration.

Tradition suggested that that President of the United States, duly elected and in office, had the responsibility and the opportunity to fill the vacancy, and so he offered as his nominee Merrick Garland from the DC Circuit court.

What happened to Merrick Garland's nomination? What was the norm and precedent? Well, there would be a hearing and a consideration of that nomination and a vote in the U.S. Senate.

That process was stopped in its tracks by one leader, the Republican leader of the U.S. Senate from Kentucky.

So when he talks about norms and precedents and creating and filling vacancies, he has forgotten that he made history in a very unusual way: by violating the most basic norm and precedent that the U.S. Senate had the responsibility to fill a vacancy on the Supreme Court. And the President of the United States, duly elected, was not a lameduck in the last year of his administration.

The second issue which was raised by the Republican leader this morning dealt with the phrase "defunding the police." I have rejected that phrase from the first time I heard it. I couldn't imagine anyone thinking that this was a sensible policy to follow when it came to the security of our homes and our communities.

I can't speak for anybody else in the Senate, but in the awful circumstance when one is called on to dial 911, you certainly hope that the police will answer and that they will be there if they are needed. Defunding them lessens that possibility, and I am not a person who supports that.

I want the very best police and law enforcement. I want them well trained,

and I want them to follow norms and conduct that are respectful of American values. But defunding the police is not something I have ever embraced or ever will.

But it is interesting to hear that argument from the Senator from Kentucky. He said that, in a way, you would be insulting and attacking the police by taking that position. One could argue that, but I would suggest to him that, in his position, stopping the creation of a commission to investigate what happened in this Chamber on January 6 and what happened to 140 members of law enforcement in the Halls of the U.S. Capitol on the same day is not respectful of the police itself.

We have had a plea—a direct plea from the men and women in uniform who guard us in this building to have an investigative commission determine what was behind that insurrectionist mob of January 6 and what we need to do to avoid it in the future. That commission and its prospects were stopped cold by the Republican leader from Kentucky. That is a fact.

In terms of being respectful of law enforcement, allowing that commission to be created—a bipartisan commission—to get to the bottom of that horrible incident, that embarrassing incident in the history of the United States, is the least we can do to respond to what the police who guard us have asked for.

I might add one other element while we are on the discussion of law enforcement and protecting America. We have a special security supplemental appropriation that was created by Senator PATRICK LEAHY of Vermont, the chairman of the Senate Committee on Appropriations, which appropriates the funds to pay the National Guard units who left their families and came here to protect us, and to pay the Capitol Police for the expenses they incurred on January 6 to fortify this Capitol against any future insurrectionist mob. That supplemental appropriations bill, which should have been passed routinely weeks ago, is still languishing for lack of agreement on the Republican side.

If you want to be respectful of law enforcement, whether they are men and women in uniform, in police units, or the National Guard, wouldn't you pay them for the services they have rendered to protect this Capitol and to protect the United States of America?

I call on the Republican leader: Instead of making a speech on the floor, call the Republican ranking member on the Senate Committee on Appropriations and ask him to waste no time in showing respect for law enforcement and to pass that security supplemental.

NOMINATION OF KENNETH ALLEN POLITE, JR.

Mr. President, on another topic, this week, the Senate will vote on the nomination of Kenneth Polite. President Biden has nominated him to serve as Assistant Attorney General for the Justice Department's Criminal Division.

As an experienced prosecutor who has served his community throughout his career, Mr. Polite is certainly qualified for this important position. From 2013 to 2017, Mr. Polite served as the U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Louisiana. While in this role, Mr. Polite's office prosecuted several large, violent, criminal organizations. He held local corrupt politicians accountable and stopped more human traffickers than during any prior U.S. attorney's term in office.

Prior to serving the people of Louisiana, Mr. Polite served as an assistant U.S. attorney in the Southern District of New York, which is a very busy and important office. There, he took on organized crime, fought corruption, healthcare fraud, and identity theft.

In addition to his extensive experience as a public servant, Mr. Polite also has a remarkable personal story. Born to teenage parents, he spent his youth in public housing projects in New Orleans before moving to the Lower Ninth Ward as a child. He graduated high school as the valedictorian of his class, and he went on to earn his undergraduate degree from Harvard and his law degree from the well-respected Georgetown University. After law school, Mr. Polite initially went into private practice, but he was inspired to become a prosecutor after his half brother was tragically killed by gun violence.

Throughout his career, Mr. Polite has always given back to the community that raised him. He has served on the boards of numerous community organizations and schools in New Orleans, and Mr. Polite's track record as an even-handed public servant has earned him support from across the aisle.

In 2011, he was appointed by a Republican Governor of Louisiana, Bobby Jindal, to serve on the Louisiana Civil Service Commission.

Then, last month, the Republican Attorney General of Louisiana, Jeff Landry, publicly voiced his support for Mr. Polite's nomination to this position in the Department of Justice. In a letter to the Senate Judiciary Committee, Mr. Landry wrote that, while serving as U.S. attorney, "Mr. Polite was not only an effective crime fighter, but he was also an invaluable member of the community."

Mr. Polite is an outstanding nominee for this critical role at the Justice Department. You should have been in the Judiciary Committee, which the Presiding Officer serves on, when his nomination came up. The praise that he won from the two Republican Senators of Louisiana is an indication of this man's popularity and of his value to Louisiana and to our country. I hope that he will receive the same broad bipartisan support in the full Senate, and I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting Mr. Polite's nomination.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. President, last week was an important day for literally millions of Americans because the child tax credit

went into effect on July 15, and many were awakened to the good news that their checking and savings accounts had been increased because of this new child tax credit.

It was part of the American Rescue Plan, the proposal by President Biden to get America back on its feet. You remember that plan, almost \$2 trillion. It was an important infusion into our economy. Money within that plan was being spent on the administration of vaccines across America. In addition to that, money was available for small businesses to receive forgivable loans. And this provision, that of enhancing the child tax credit, was an important part of it as well.

We have had tax credits in the past for families with children, but this was an especially important one because it was fully refundable, which meant it went to the lower-income families who might not have had enough income to merit a tax responsibility. This now is fully refundable, so there is no tax responsibility necessary to receive the payment. It also was a benefit that extended beyond poor and low-income families to middle-income families across America. Some of these families with this payment of \$300 a month for each child under the age of 6 and \$250 a month for those between 6 and 17 would receive resources which they desperately need to make certain that their children have a fighting chance.

We are especially proud of the fact that this infusion of cash into the hands of many families will literally mean it will lift them above the poverty line in America. Almost half of the kids in poverty will be spared that by this tax credit. So it has a direct and important impact.

I had a press conference last Friday in Chicago with one of the parents who will be benefited by this. Her name is Susana Salgado. She is a mother of three—an 11-year-old, a 16-year-old, and a 23-year-old. Her family relies on her husband's income. He works as a restaurant worker in Chicago to pay the bills, but when the pandemic hit, his hours were cut drastically. A return to normal remains elusive for people like Susana Salgado because, at the same time the family's livelihood vanished, their cost of living increased.

During the pandemic, as parents know well, schooling moved into the home and the high-speed internet connection became an absolute necessity for her kids to keep up in school. Thanks to the enhanced child tax credit, Susana can finally afford her monthly internet bill. It sounds like a small thing, but if the alternative is a child falling behind a grade in school, it is a critical family decision. That means her two younger children can keep up with their studies and her oldest son can remain in college. Something as basic as that can mean the difference in a young child's progress in his life.

So I salute President Biden for the American Rescue Plan, which helped to

distribute vaccines across America, helped small businesses get back on their feet, and is helping millions of Americans and children and families as of this day. I am sorry that there was not one single Republican vote in support of that proposal, but I believe it was money well spent and continues to benefit this country. We have a lot of work to do in this country.

I will close by saying this: I was on radio shows this morning in downstate Illinois. Chicago, and the Chicagoland, area have been able to get vaccinated to a level where they are starting to breathe a little easier in anticipating children going back to school in the fall, businesses reopening, and people getting out and about. You can just feel it in the air. Yet that is not the case all over the United States.

The City of Los Angeles, I understand, is opposed to a new mask requirement, which, unfortunately, evidences the fact that there are still too many infections these days related to COVID-19. Unfortunately, as Dr. Fauci and others have said, these infections are reflected in people who have not yet been vaccinated, by and large, and it is an indication that we can't let up on our effort to continue vaccinations across America. It is the only way to successfully put this pandemic to rest and return to normal life in America.

To those who are not vaccinated, I am sure they are not watching C-SPAN for advice, but I hope they will turn to a doctor or a nurse or to someone they trust in the community and hear about the safety of these vaccines, which have been safely administered to millions of people across the United States.

If each and every one of us accepts our personal responsibility to get vaccinated to protect ourselves, our families, those we love, and those all around us, we will finally bring this pandemic to an end. At this point, there are many, many who are still holding back. I hope they will reconsider that position.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PADILLA). The Republican whip.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Senators CORNYN, GRASSLEY, and I be allowed to complete our remarks before the scheduled rollcall votes.

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

FOR THE PEOPLE ACT

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, it has been all political theater all the time lately as the Democrats attempt to manufacture a crisis that will allow them to pass their partisan Federal takeover of State election law.

There was President Biden's overwrought speech in Philadelphia last week warning that election laws being passed in various States are "the most dangerous threat to voting and the integrity of free and fair elections in our history."

That is right, in our Nation's history.

Apparently, post-Civil War voter suppression laws and poll taxes and other atrocities don't hold a candle to what is happening today in places like Georgia, where—the horror—only election officials will be able to hand out water to those in line at the polls.

Then, of course, there were the Texas Democrats' antics as they flew to Washington via a private jet to shut down the Texas Legislature and prevent election legislation from being passed there, and the Senate Democrats' field hearing in Georgia yesterday to highlight the supposed horrors of Georgia's mainstream election law.

In his speech last week, President Biden mentioned stopping the spread of disinformation, which is an ironic statement when the Democrats are engaging in one of the most massive campaigns of disinformation we have ever seen, because—and let's be very clear—the narrative the Democrats are peddling, which is that States are engaging in a massive campaign of voter suppression, is simply false.

In other years, I doubt whether any of the State voting laws that have been passed would have been more than a blip in the national news because they are nothing more than ordinary, mainstream updates to State voting guidelines. The Georgia law that has provoked so much Democratic hysteria is not only squarely in the mainstream when it comes to State election laws, but it is actually, in some ways, more permissive than voting laws in some Democratic-led States.

A piece in the New York Times, hardly a newspaper that carries water for Republicans, concluded that the voting provisions of the Georgia law are "unlikely to significantly affect turnout or Democratic chances."

In fact, the piece notes that Georgia's law could "plausibly even increase turnout."

Meanwhile, the Washington Post Fact Checker column noted again: "The law does not put up roadblocks to Black Americans registering to vote." That from the Washington Post Fact Checker.

And yet Democrats have repeatedly asked us to believe that this law is "Jim Crow on steroids" and part of "the most significant test of our democracy since the Civil War." Those are quotes, actual quotes, from Democrats.

That is right, since the Civil War. Apparently, segregation and the horrors of Jim Crow are nothing compared to Georgia's adjustment of its regulations on no-excuse absentee voting, which isn't even allowed in some Democrat-led States like New York.

It is almost comical, except that it is not, because there is nothing funny about Democrats irresponsibly evoking the horrors of Jim Crow to convince Americans that reasonable reforms to election laws are really a dastardly plot to suppress votes.

There is nothing amusing about Democrats attempting to deceive the