

to modernize our monetary policy so American leaders could control America's destiny.

After an interlude in the private sector, Secretary Shultz's country came calling again. He spent 6½ of President Reagan's 8 years as Secretary of State. He helped steer the smart and strong foreign policy that clinched the free world's victory over the Soviet Union, but even as the Reagan administration nudged communism into a box canyon, this top diplomat's master touch was vital in making sure that tensions did not rise too high.

As amazing as it sounds, this impressive resume doesn't fully explain George Shultz's incredible reputation. It wasn't just all he did. It was how he did it. He led with thoughtfulness, fairness, and, above all, integrity. He lived by the maxim he shared in his centennial reflection just a few weeks ago.

Here is what he said:

Trust is the coin of the realm.

His honesty and thoughtfulness won wide admiration that transcended politics. He won the trust of career diplomats and State Department staff, including those who did not naturally lean to the Reagan right.

Famously, when new Ambassadors met with him on their way abroad, the Secretary would spin a globe and ask them to point out "their country." The unlucky ones who fell for the trap and pointed to their foreign destinations were swiftly corrected. "No," he said. "Your country is always America."

At the McConnell Center at the University of Louisville, we host a distinguished speaker series. George Shultz honored us as our very first ever distinguished speaker back in 1993, and he kept right on writing and speaking and mentoring young people up until just a few weeks ago.

America was his country, all right. He loved it deeply and served it always. The Senate's prayers are with the Shultz family and all the friends and colleagues he leaves behind, a truly remarkable life.

CORONAVIRUS

Madam President, in 2020, a Republican Senate and a Republican administration led five historic pandemic rescue packages on a completely bipartisan basis.

We marshaled the largest Federal response to any crisis since World War II—about \$4 trillion across five bills—all of it completely bipartisan, but now Washington Democrats have other ideas. Even though we are still pushing out \$900 billion in relief that Congress passed less than 2 months ago, even though a group of Senate Republicans met with President Biden to discuss bipartisan avenues for hundreds of billions of dollars more, Washington Democrats have decided they want to go it alone.

It was last March—remember?—when a senior House Democrat called this disaster a "tremendous opportunity to restructure things to fit our vision."

Americans are suffering, but their side seems to see an opportunity to ram through ideological change. That is the impulse behind the Democrats' latest \$1.9 trillion proposal. Their plan for more massive borrowing puts leftwing myths ahead of the scientific evidence and the Nation's urgent needs. While the Biden administration's own scientists say schools could reopen safely right now with smart and simple precautions, their proposal buys into the myth from Big Labor that schools should stay shut a whole lot longer.

While Republicans want to save as many jobs as possible, Washington Democrats are backing Senator SANDERS' demand to more than double the minimum wage. The Congressional Budget Office says this would kill 1.4 million American jobs. Nonpartisan experts say it would send more people to the unemployment line than it would lift out of poverty. But remember, this is all about liberal dreams, not urgent needs.

Some Democrats even want to break Senate rules to jam this through. Last week, the Senate had a 14-hour voting marathon on amendments to the phony, partisan budget that Democrats jammed through as a procedural first step. We got Senators on the record on a host of questions that matter to American families. Sadly, the Democrats blocked our efforts to say that, at the very least, school districts where teachers have been vaccinated certainly need to reopen, to press States to accurately report nursing home deaths, to protect the free exercise of religion, and several more.

Other amendments divided Democrats and were adopted. For example, over some Democrats' objections, the Senate said that illegal immigrants should not receive stimulus checks, that the Keystone XL Pipeline should not be canceled, and that our government should not declare war on fracking. But, amazingly enough, at the end of the night, the very same Senate Democrats who had sought to appear moderate by supporting those three things turned around and voted in lockstep to strip them all out again.

Our colleagues who said they supported these changes voted to strip them right back out at the end of the evening. That is about as Washington, DC, as it gets.

For the sake of America's kids, American jobs, Americans' health, Democrats should put the political games aside and resume the same kinds of bipartisan talks they demanded constantly all of last year. American families deserve a process and a bill that put their actual needs at the center.

BURMA

Now, Madam President, on one final matter, over the weekend, hundreds of thousands of protesters stood up across Burma in defiance of the military coup.

For a week now, the military has detained hundreds of civil society leaders and democratically elected officials,

some on mysterious or obviously specious charges and others without any charge at all. Their actions were illegitimate right from the start, and the treatment of these political prisoners is showing the world the military regime's disdain for the rule of law.

In the face of this tyranny and with the memory of how brutally the military has dealt with protesters in the past, the public unity of so many of Burma's people is a powerful display of courage. In far-flung cities and towns, members of the country's diverse ethnic groups, from the Burman majority to the Shan and Rohingya minorities, have rallied around the democratically elected government. They are demanding justice and an end to military rule.

I have been encouraged over the past week by the diplomatic efforts undertaken by the administration to demonstrate the U.S. condemnation of the military's flagrant assault on political rights. Today, it is time to follow up with meaningful costs on those who aid and abet the suffocation of Burmese democracy.

The people of Burma in the streets today are putting their lives on the line. As one protestor told the New York Times over the weekend, "I don't care if they shoot because under the military, our lives will be dead anyway."

Today, these protestors are joining in the same refrain heard repeatedly in places like Hong Kong, where democratic progress is too often met with jackboots. They are standing up for basic freedoms, and they are paying close attention to who will stand with them.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

NEW START TREATY

Mrs. FISCHER. Madam President, I come to the floor today to discuss the administration's decision to extend the New START treaty by 5 years.

Supporters hailed the move, with the New York Times reporting that the President's decision "avoided a renewed arms race." Meanwhile, critics, who believed the question of extension had given the United States leverage to extract concessions from Russia, as well as China, described the move as a wasted opportunity and a giveaway to Putin.

As the last bilateral arms control agreement between the United States and Russia, perhaps it shouldn't be surprising that the debate over extending New START took on outsized importance, with parties on both sides seeing it as the vehicle to accomplish all of their goals. Now, with the extension decided, it comes with an opportunity to regain our perspective and consider

the way forward. This begins with a clearer understanding of what the New START treaty accomplishes and what it doesn't.

To begin with, the New START treaty is not a panacea, and extending the agreement does not prevent an arms race with just the stroke of a pen; nor is it an unfair agreement that locks in Russian advantages. It is simply an agreement between the United States and Russia to limit some but not all of the categories of nuclear arms. China is not a party to this agreement.

As critics have pointed out, the treaty's counting rules obscure the true number of deployed nuclear weapons, and it has not prevented Russia's buildup of other kinds of nuclear arms not covered by its limits. Some have described these as "loopholes" for Russia, but they are well-known limitations that also apply equally to both sides.

Since the treaty was signed, the United States has chosen not to invest in new nuclear weapons outside of the treaty's limits. Well, Russia has done the opposite, and they continue to expand their nuclear arsenal. I disagree with my colleagues who see that as a failure of the treaty. It is a failure in the Russian Government for continuing to build up its nuclear arsenal instead of matching our restraint and lowering those tensions.

But it would also be a failure on our part if we had assumed Russia would refrain from building these systems out of the goodness of their heart. Indeed, Russia's behavior since the New START treaty was signed reminds us that it continues to seek a competitive advantage, and in order to achieve its goals, it will go around the limits, as it has done with the New START treaty, or it will go straight through them, as it did with the INF Treaty.

So Russia's nuclear capabilities continue to expand, as does China's buildup of nuclear arms. That New START hasn't prevented these from occurring reflects the fact that the New START treaty simply does not account for the full spectrum of nuclear challenges, and thus, with the agreement to extend the treaty in place, serious threats still remain that really demand our attention.

The growth of both Russia's and China's arsenals must be addressed. Some have called for the Biden administration to immediately pursue talks to this end.

While hurrying to convene another diplomatic summit may have a reassuring appearance to some, diplomacy is not an end unto itself. It is a means to an end.

It is important to remember that negotiating limits on Russia's tactical weapons and bringing China into the arms control process have long been U.S. diplomatic objectives. Indeed, the Obama-Biden administration sought these goals, as did the Trump administration, which deserves credit for elevating them to the highest levels. However, the consistent refusal of both

Russia and China to engage in serious talks demonstrates that neither nation feels sufficient incentive to negotiate. New attempts at negotiations without addressing this wouldn't achieve a different result.

In truth, what is needed isn't another conference in a European capital; it is a serious effort here at home to create incentives for both Russia and China to halt their nuclear buildups and to have them choose a different path.

Congress and the administration should work together to strengthen the hands of our negotiators. To that end, we can start by rejecting calls being made by some advocates to cut our nuclear forces unilaterally or allow them to age into obsolescence by delaying their much needed modernization. These calls are not new; however, our senior military leaders have consistently advised against such courses of action, and the past two administrations have rejected them as well. They should be rejected again.

As most in this Chamber know, our nuclear forces have aged far beyond their designed lifetime. After delaying and deferring the modernization of our nuclear forces for decades, we are now at an inflection point. As Admiral Richard, the current STRATCOM commander, testified last year, "Many of the modernization and sustainment efforts necessary to ensure the deterrent's viability have zero schedule margin and are late-to-need."

His point is clear. Further delay will result in capabilities aging-out with no replacements available. Our nuclear deterrent would literally wither on the vine. This would have a number of disastrous consequences for our security at a time when nuclear threats are growing, and it would also dramatically undermine future diplomatic efforts to negotiate limits with Russia and China on their arsenals. After all, why would either nation agree to new rounds of arms reductions if they knew that the United States was cutting its forces anyway, regardless of whether they agreed to do likewise?

We must keep this in mind when we hear calls to dismantle the triad or cancel our modernization programs. Doing so would make our country less safe by cutting the forces needed to deter aggression, and it would make the world less safe by ensuring that the United States is never in a position again to push for real reductions to Russian and Chinese nuclear forces.

Instead of reducing incentives for Russia and China to negotiate, Congress and the administration should work together to strengthen them and set the conditions for successful diplomatic efforts in the future.

Thank you, Madam President.

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.

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

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

NOMINATION OF DENIS RICHARD McDONOUGH

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Madam President, today I rise in support of my friend and fellow Minnesotan, Denis McDonough, as President Biden's nominee for Secretary of Veterans Affairs. And no one knows but you, the Senator from Illinois, Madam President, about how important this job is for our veterans.

Denis grew up in Stillwater, MN, which is right near the Wisconsin border. He is a grandson of Irish immigrants, the son of devout Catholic parents, and brother to 10 siblings. He attended St. John's College in Collegeville, MN, and in addition to graduating summa cum laude, he played safety on the very proud championship St. John's football team.

I have been privileged to call Denis a friend for years, and I know he will serve our country well as the Secretary of Veterans Affairs. As he has done his whole life, he will honor the promises our country has made to our veterans and their families.

Denis's commitment to our Nation's veterans was clear during his time as President Obama's Chief of Staff, where he made sure that every decision impacting our servicemembers, veterans, and their families was befitting of their sacrifices. Showing respect and gratitude for our Nation's veterans is not something Denis just prioritizes; it is a value for him.

As we know from his time as President Obama's Chief of Staff, he is an adept manager who understands how to tackle complex challenges throughout our government, which will be vital for the next Secretary.

As we also know, the VA is facing a number of challenges, from helping veterans to stay safe during the pandemic to improving the quality of care for veterans around the country. These are not simple problems, and these are not simple challenges, and they will require, as you have shown, Madam President, true leadership and vision, which has been, again, the hallmark of Denis's time in public service.

I also know that he will work tirelessly to find bipartisan solutions, and I think you see that from the support that he has gotten throughout the country as well as on the Veterans' Affairs Committee, where I was honored to introduce him when he started on this journey of Senate approval, and it has never been more important than ever to unite our country and get that kind of support. So much of our work with our veterans is about keeping our promises and showing respect, not just in words but in actions.

What other Senators who don't know Denis as well or are new to Washington—what they may see as time goes on, they will see the qualities of honor and loyalty in Denis's commitment to his family, which also includes his family in Minnesota. I know this firsthand. He has so many relatives that you can't go anywhere without