

past weekend, in New York, I stood with some amazing families—some amazing parents and their beautiful baby, a miracle of IVF—to say that we Democrats will do everything we can to protect access to IVF, and I hope that in this Chamber we will be joined by our Republican colleagues when we vote tomorrow, because tomorrow we will take up Senator DUCKWORTH's Right to IVF Act.

The vast majority of Americans support requiring insurance plans to cover IVF treatments, and I bet every one of us knows someone who has struggled with infertility at one point or another. In my own family, IVF was the answer to our prayers. I have a beautiful grandchild thanks to the miracle of IVF, and I could not bear to imagine the pain we would feel if we were told: Sorry, you are out of luck.

If Republicans truly stand on the side of families, as they regularly claim, then they should leap at the opportunity to protect people's right to access IVF. They should stand ready to pass a bill that makes this treatment available on insurance plans. They should vote yes tomorrow. Of course, we are already beginning to hear the same tired, predictable, and unconvincing excuses from our Republican colleagues looking for a way to vote against IVF protections.

To my Republican colleagues: If you truly support IVF, then vote for a bill that actually protects IVF through the letter of the law.

Republicans cannot claim to be pro-family on the one hand, while then voting against IVF protection bills on the other. Americans are much smarter than that.

Republicans had a chance to back up their rhetoric with action when we voted earlier this year, and nearly all of them failed. I hope tomorrow will bring a different result. The American people will be watching.

#### GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, now on the CR, legislators now have roughly 2 weeks to reach an agreement to keep the government open beyond the September 30 deadline. It is not really much time at all. In order to avoid a shutdown, the worst thing our colleagues in the House can do right now is waste time on proposals that don't have broad, bipartisan support. But that is what the Speaker and his Republican colleagues have been doing all month long, and it is already September 16.

Mr. Speaker JOHNSON, you know as well as everyone else that your plan is a no-go as currently written. A 6-month CR with poison pills is not going to fly in a narrowly divided government.

CRs are always meant to be a short-term extension funding to give appropriators more time to do their work. They are not meant to be a substitute for Congress doing its job.

And if the hard right thinks that we will willingly give them leverage to ram Project 2025 down the American people's throats early next year by agreeing to a 6-month CR, they are dreaming. MAGA radicals are hoping they can use the threat of a shutdown next spring to pass the very worst of Project 2025. They want to cut the Department of Education. They want to eliminate Head Start. They want to privatize Fannie and Freddie, raising mortgage rates, making it harder to buy a home. They want to monitor women's pregnancies—monitor them—and potentially cut VA funding and more. We cannot—we will not—let that happen.

But even before we get to all of that, pushing for a CR that lasts 6 months, as the Speaker wants, would also mean that a slew of critical programs would still be shortchanged. It would be awful for our military. You simply cannot run the military with a 6-month stopgap—little surprise that even many House Republicans recognize the Speaker's current approach is the wrong one.

The answer to the Speaker's problem is not very complicated. The Speaker should drop his current proposal and work with both parties on an extension that prioritizes keeping the government open—open without pushing poison pills. We are happy to work with him.

Now, despite all its flaws, there are some bits of good news in the Speaker's proposal that I hope we can build on. I am very heartened that the Speaker's current proposal preserves the essence of the Schumer-Johnson agreement from early this year, the one that set top-line funding levels for fiscal year 2024.

This is a good sign because, last September, Speaker McCarthy wasted precious time trying to pass a CR that curried favor with the hard right through very deep, brutal funding cuts. In the end, that approach didn't work, and Speaker McCarthy was removed from the speakership anyway because of the radicals on his right flank.

For now, Speaker JOHNSON seems to be taking a different approach, and it is not pushing for across-the-board cuts as part of his CR. That is good news. It is a sign Speaker JOHNSON may be accepting the reality that any deal we reach will have to include the spending levels we agreed to earlier this year.

To be clear, there are still far too many omissions in his current proposal, and a 6-month timeline is not acceptable, but I hope we have a foundation on which to build upon. Make no mistake about it—the clock is ticking. We have until September 30 before the government shuts down.

If the government shuts down, it will be average Americans who suffer most. A government shutdown means seniors who rely on Social Security could be thrown into chaos as the Social Security Administration limits certain services, like benefit verifications or

fixing errors in payments. Our veterans could see regional VA offices shut down and support services put on halt. Some of our military servicemembers could be forced to work without pay. Families who benefit from WIC and other nutrition programs could see benefits halted. And a shutdown would shake the confidence of our economic recovery—something we can't possibly afford at a time like this.

If a shutdown happens because of Republican poison pills, the American people are going to hold them responsible.

We don't need to go down this road. We still have a little time to reach a bipartisan agreement. So I hope the Speaker drops his current plan.

#### JUDICIAL NOMINATIONS

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, now on judges, finally, after today, the Senate will reach another great milestone in our effort to confirm more strong judges. With today's vote on Kevin Ritz to serve as a circuit court judge for the Sixth Circuit, the Senate will reach 210 judges confirmed under President Biden.

Mr. Ritz would be an excellent addition to the Federal bench. He is rated "well qualified" by the ABA and has spent his entire career with the U.S. Attorney's Office. Seventy-five percent of all the cases he has worked on have been criminal proceedings. In trial, he has won convictions on everything from carjackings, to firearm offenses, to robbery. On the merits, he deserves confirmation.

I thank Chairman DURBIN, members of the Judiciary Committee, and all my colleagues who have helped us reach 210 judges. Many have been bipartisan. I am glad to say. And once we finish with Mr. Ritz, we will keep going.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam 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.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

#### TRUMP ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I am dismayed to begin another week with news of an assassination attempt against a former President. We are certainly all grateful once again that the worst outcome was avoided.

This ought to be a moment of soul-searching for all Americans. It is a

time to reflect on the ways that our political process has been injected by reprehensible violence. In America, our democracy flows from the ballot box, not from the barrel of a gun—period.

In the meantime, for the second time in as many months, law enforcement faces an even more urgent task: completing a thorough, swift, and transparent investigation into the circumstances of yesterday's close call.

The American people deserve answers. They deserve assurance that a former President whom tens of millions of Americans have nominated once again will receive every appropriate measure of security. And they ought to receive them without delay.

#### NATIONAL SECURITY

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, now on another matter, I have repeatedly warned colleagues on both sides against setting aside America's interests in pursuit of closer relations with foreign leaders who they think share their values.

I made it clear to Washington Democrats that whatever kudos the Paris climate deal earned them with European greens, punishing America for producing affordable, reliable, and abundant energy was welcome news to China, the world's leading emitter of carbon, and to Russia, which would weaponize Europe's own reliance in due course.

Likewise, I have urged fellow Republicans to recognize that despite whatever affinity we might be expected to hold for a Hungarian ruling party that professes traditional values, legitimizing Victor Orban's reckless obeisance to China, Russia, and Iran is not in America's interests.

And I have been clear-eyed about the regimes with which the United States shares neither interests nor values, and acted accordingly. For example, the strategic case for maximum pressure and credible deterrence against Iran, the world's most active state sponsor of terror, is compelling enough on its own. Weakening sanctions in exchange for empty promises on nuclear proliferation is not in America's strategic interests; neither is responding to proxy violence with half measures.

The only way to achieve measurable improvements to the security of America's interests in Iran's backyard is to change Iran's calculus. This is, of course, an opportunity for the United States and allies with common interests in the region to work more closely together in applying meaningful pressure on Tehran—an opportunity as yet unseized.

But lest anyone forget, just as Tehran's export of terror threatens America's interests, its repression at home is an affront to American values. Today is the second anniversary of the beating, detention, and murder of Mahsa Amini at the hands of Iran's morality police. Tehran's thugs killed another 500 people and detained thou-

sands more who took to the streets in protest.

Today, Iranian women are continuing their protest against the regime's repressive morality laws. Many are walking the streets without head coverings, and 34 political prisoners have gone on a hunger strike. Tehran is marking the anniversary in its own way: placing Ms. Amini's surviving family under unofficial house arrest.

Further east, in Kabul, another group of medieval theocrats is dragging Afghan women and girls even further backward into the familiar repression of Taliban rule. A new "vice and virtue law" amounts to an even more severe crackdown on education for Afghan girls, with even tighter restrictions on women's behavior in public.

Like in Iran, Taliban repression is not difficult to recognize as abhorrent, and the latest developments are an outcome many of us saw coming years ago. Unfortunately, they are also a shameful reminder of a decision that damaged American interests and a sales campaign that denied observable reality. Recall that as the Taliban surged back into power in Kabul, President Biden insisted that "human rights will be the center of our foreign policy." Remember how the President's National Security Advisor declared that the administration was "absolutely resolutely committed" to "alleviate the burden that [Afghan] women and girls will face in the days ahead."

I am curious how the administration would rate the effectiveness of that commitment. I wonder whether it thinks its confidence in so-called over-the-horizon counterterrorism has paid off.

And when the administration's special envoy warns that its "patience with the Taliban is running out," I can't help but ask why on Earth any such patience would align with America's interests in the first place, let alone our values.

#### CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

#### EXECUTIVE SESSION

##### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Kevin Gafford Ritz, of Tennessee, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Sixth Circuit.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The senior Senator from Illinois.

##### TRUMP ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, like many Americans yesterday afternoon,

I heard reports of what Federal law enforcement is investigating as a possible assassination attempt on former President Trump while he was golfing in Florida. Thankfully, the former President was not harmed, and there were no injuries, and the subject was quickly taken into custody.

I am grateful for the work of the Secret Service and their law enforcement partners to keep the President and those around him safe.

My staff was briefed by the Secret Service last night, and there is an active investigation into this incident as law enforcement gathers more details about what happened. As I have said many times, there is no place for violence in our country no matter what the motive. It must come to an end.

##### SIREN ACT

Madam President, on a different topic, a recent report from The Wall Street Journal had a stark headline. It read: "Your Ambulance Is on the Way, ETA: 65 Minutes."

Across rural America, nearly 5 million Americans live in an ambulance desert, where access to critical emergency care is limited, and in eight States, there were fewer than three ambulances for every 1,000 square miles of land. Think about it. If you or a loved one experienced cardiac arrest or an overdose—when seconds truly matter—you may not be able to receive timely care; and across rural Illinois, EMS personnel are often the only healthcare providers around, with many being volunteers.

To keep our rural communities thriving, we must ensure our first responders are ready for the call. So in 2018, 6 years ago, I worked with then-Republican Senator Pat Roberts, of Kansas, to pass into law a bill called the SIREN Act. I was inspired by a visit from Mark Kennedy, a paramedic from Nauvoo, IL, in Hancock County, who told me some of the challenges they were facing. The SIREN Act provides Federal funding for rural fire and EMS Agencies for recruitment, certification courses, and purchasing equipment—everything from Naloxone to power stretchers. Over the past 5 years, we have steadily increased funding for this small but important program. In total, we have sent \$40 million to rural communities in 42 States, both red and blue.

The SIREN Act is up for reauthorization now. Senator SUSAN COLLINS, of Maine, and I have teamed up in recent years to increase the funding for it and on legislation to extend funding for another 5 years. Our bill is endorsed by the National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians, the International Association of Fire Chiefs, the International Association of Firefighters, and the National Rural Health Association. Last December, it unanimously passed the Senate.

This week, the House is scheduled to take it up. I applaud the sponsors for their work in the House to advance the bill out of committee by a 46-to-nothing vote, and I urge the House to