

This Federal judge is an example of actual misconduct documented, investigated, and confirmed by her own judicial colleagues.

Now, all this outrage about the Supreme Court being packed, what about the outrage from Democrats about this incident I just described? I haven't heard any whatsoever.

While House Democrats hold themselves out as caring about judicial oversight—they do it in hearings, they do it on floor speeches, and they do it in press releases—they are very silent when it comes to a real, bona fide scandal right under their very noses.

To House Democrats, judicial oversight looks like a one-way street. When they are unhappy with the Supreme Court rulings, they are willing to blow up the entire institution and rig the Court to achieve their preferred outcomes. When a district judge conducts a years-long affair in her chambers, lies to investigators, and violates the judicial canons, these Democrats don't say a single word.

That is not judicial oversight. That is, very simply, politics.

The Supreme Court is doing its job. It doesn't answer to the Republican Party or the Democrat Party. It answers to the Constitution. The American people know that, and the House Democrats should learn that. If House Democrats want to talk about judicial oversight, they should focus on a real scandal like the one happening right now in Georgia that I described, and they should do that instead of fabricating reasons to pack the Court.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CURTIS). The Senator from Louisiana.

#### APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, it is the best of times, it is the worst of times, it is the age of wisdom, but it is also the age of jackassery.

Sometimes I don't recognize our world. I will give you one example, at least from my perspective. President Xi in China, President Putin in Russia, and the Ayatollah in Iran have formed a partnership. It is not an equal partnership. The managing partner is President Xi. Unless you are the reason your parents drink, I think you can see that. It is just obvious.

And their goal—President Xi and his two junior partners—is to have Russia dominate Eastern Europe, to have Iran dominate the Middle East, to have China dominate the Indo-Pacific, and have the freedom to roam throughout Sub-Saharan Africa and South America and the Arctic and space.

Now, that is the game plan. That is not a world that is safe for America. I do not want America to be the world's policeman, but I don't want Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin and the Ayatollah in Iran to be either.

We have to meet this challenge. To do that, we have to spend more money on defense. I wish we didn't, but we do.

Now, there are only three ways to do that, as you know, Mr. President:

Through our budget, the regular appropriation process; through what is called a supplemental bill, which deals just with defense spending; and through the process of reconciliation.

Passing a supplemental bill is not going to work for reasons—the same reasons that we are not going to be able to pass a budget, about which I will talk in a second.

We have the option of reconciliation, but time is running out. And I hear all of the happy talk—I don't mean that really in a pejorative sense, even though I realize it came out that way. But I hear all the happy talk from the House, and I have participated in that happy talk saying we need to do a third reconciliation bill. But if I am honest with myself, I know we are not.

And when the press comes to me—one came to me today—one particular reporter. He was down by the escalators kind of walking around looking like he had lost his luggage at the airport. And he came, and he said: I want to ask you a question, like I have got a quote every day. And he said: So and so says we are going to have a third reconciliation. What is your response?

My response was honest: dream weaver. I wish it would happen, but I don't think it will.

The only way to get more money to protect America is through our appropriations bill. We can also do a supplemental, which I just referred to, but if we can't pass an appropriations bill, we sure can't pass a supplemental.

I am on the Appropriations Committee. As you know, Mr. President, our budget is so big, we don't do just one bill. We do 12 mini bills. We divide it up. That is a lot of bills to pass, but we have done it before. We did it last year.

The budget that we are operating under right now was passed in a bipartisan effort, with the exception of a small piece of Homeland Security. It was passed with a bipartisan effort and voted for by both Democrats and Republicans. That is the way it is supposed to work. Other than confirming Presidential nominations, that is our most important job: to put together a budget. So we know it can be done.

Now, our fiscal year—don't ask me why—runs from September 30 to October 1. So the budget under which we are operating right now, which all Democrats—not all but most Democrats—and Republicans joined in on, is going to run out September 30. So we have been working on a new budget, which will begin October 1.

I hope I am wrong, but there is not going to be a budget. And if I am wrong, I will come to this floor and I will say: I was wrong; I apologize.

But it is clear to me, from our negotiations with my Democratic friends—and they are my friends. They are the Presiding Officer's friends too. We don't hate in this Chamber. We try to get along. But it is clear to me, from my discussions with my Democratic friends, that there is no scenario under

which they are going to pass the budget.

They understand we have to spend more money on defense. President Trump has proposed a 42-percent increase in defense spending. That is pretty strong. That is as strong as horseradish. We might can do it if we work together and did it through a supplemental and regular order and a reconciliation bill. But without that—without busting it up—I think 42 percent would be, even on our best day, very, very hard to do in regular order. I think, if everybody were pulling in the same direction, we could probably do a 20- to 25-percent increase in defense spending in our regular budget. We would have to borrow the money. It breaks my heart. And I know we can work hard to find some offsets. But we just have to do it.

But here is the problem: My Democratic colleagues are not going to go along. They are not. I know they say they are, but they are not.

First, in order to do a budget, you have to know how much money you are going to spend—duh. We call that the top line. So when we go to our Democratic friends and say, "Let's negotiate a top line," they say, "We are thinking about it." And we make an offer, and they say, "We will consider it." And then we make another offer, and they say, "We will consider it." Then we make a third offer, and they say, "We are thinking about it." You know, when people act like they don't care, sometimes, it is not an act. They won't even negotiate seriously about the top line.

We are together a lot. We talk among ourselves. And I have had some of my Democratic friends tell me privately: If you want to spend 25 percent more on defense, we want 25 percent more on nondefense—welfare, social spending.

Now, they know we are not going to agree to that. You know what that tells me? They don't want a budget. And I think that if we went to our Democratic colleagues today and said, "OK, you win; we are going to spend 25 percent more on defense, and we will spend 25 percent more on nondefense; let's vote," every single Democrat would vote no. Every single Democrat will vote no in the Appropriations Committee and on the floor of the Senate.

If I am wrong, I will apologize. I may be wrong, but I doubt it, because my colleague Senator SCHUMER, as is his right, is telling the Democrats not to agree to a budget. And Senator SCHUMER, as is his right, is taking his orders from the Graham Platner wing of the Democratic Party.

It is not all Democrats. It is not all Democrats. But, clearly, the Graham Platner wing of the Democratic Party is in control. And many members of Democratic leadership are scared to death of them, and they are going to do what the Graham Platner wing of the party wants. And what the Graham Platner wing of the party wants is to

burn it down—burn it down. They want chaos because they think it will help them win the midterm elections. And for that reason, I don't think we are going to have a budget.

We will keep trying. Our chair is SUSAN COLLINS. Chairwoman COLLINS and Vice Chairwoman PATTY MURRAY put together the budget last year. They did a great job. We know it can be done. But I think that is the game plan. And the cherry on top is going to be—you watch. We are going to get to September, and Republicans are going to say: Well, we don't have a budget because you refused to talk about it, because you want chaos, because Senator SCHUMER told you to create chaos, because the Graham Platner wing of the Democratic Party told Senator SCHUMER to tell you to create chaos.

And we are going to say: Let's don't shut down the government. Let's do what is called a continuing resolution. Let's maintain the status quo so we can keep the government open.

And Senator SCHUMER is going to shut it down as tight as Dick's hatband. That is what is going to happen. That is what is going to happen. You heard it here first.

And that is not fair to the American people. That is not fair to the American people in the world that we live in today. And that, in my opinion, is totally irresponsible—in order to win a midterm election, to create that kind of chaos in this dangerous world. That, to me, is living proof that human evolution is a slow process.

The American people deserve better. And if I am wrong, I will come to this floor and say: I was wrong. My Democratic colleagues are willing to negotiate. They don't have a predetermined game plan. They are not slaves to the loon wing of their party. They understand that the American people, both domestically and internationally, need help.

I will be the first to say I am wrong. And I may be wrong, but I doubt it. The American people deserve better. And if I am wrong, I hope they will prove me wrong.

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

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

#### MAJOR RICHARD STAR ACT

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, earlier today, there was a discussion here on the Senate floor of the Major Richard Star Act, legislation that I cosponsored and strongly support. This legislation would allow medically retired veterans with combat-related disabilities to receive their full military retirement pay from the Department of Defense and disability compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

I came to the Senate floor in March to express my support for the Major

Richard Star Act and to reiterate to my colleagues that I want to work together to see this bill signed into law this year. That is what I still seek to accomplish.

I have been working with my House colleague Chairman MIKE BOST, the chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, the chairman of the Armed Services Committee here in the Senate, with the legislative leadership, the majority leader's office here in the Senate on a comprehensive veterans package that would improve the delivery of healthcare, benefits and services for veterans, servicemembers, survivors, caregivers, military families, and VA staff.

Notably, this package that we are putting together that we have developed and continue to develop would include the Major Richard Star Act. Veterans who did not get a chance to complete their military career due to medical retirement should not be penalized because they received disability compensation from the VA.

This comprehensive legislative package also includes the bipartisan Veterans ACCESS Act, the Love Lives On Act, the Sharri Briley and Eric Edmundson Veterans Benefits Expansion Act, among a number of other bills sponsored by Republicans and by Democrats.

We are close to a final agreement to introduce this comprehensive veterans package. This is not anything out of the norm, but putting this package together, we are going to include the Major Richard Star Act for which the Armed Services Committee has jurisdiction, not the Veterans' Affairs Committee.

We are doing this because we see a way forward, finally, on the Major Richard Star Act becoming law. We are close to reaching an agreement on that package. We have worked extensively over months with veterans service organizations, a wide array—dozens of them—to garner their feedback, to seek their input, to determine whether they can be supportive, and continue to review this legislation in the way we intend, including the way we intend to pay for it.

In addition to working with veterans service organizations, Chairman BOST and I have met with our Democrat and Republican colleagues in both the House and Senate on our committees, the White House's Domestic Policy Council, and the Department of Veterans Affairs to make certain we are creating legislation that is sound policy, has widespread support, and the ability to gain the necessary votes.

Let me say that again: the ability to gain the necessary votes to be passed and signed into law and, most importantly, at the same time will meet the needs of our Nation's veterans.

It is easy to come to the floor and ask for unanimous consent to make a point, but we are doing something different. It takes hard work and consensus building to pass legislation that

meets the needs of veterans and has the ability to become law.

This is not just like a symbolic thing that we are with our veterans; it is how do we make something that matters so greatly to them actual law and the benefits they would receive.

I, again, express my support for the Major Richard Star Act, but that means little—my saying that means little to the veterans who are currently being denied the benefits owed them for their military service. I have served on both the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committees and often remark how the committees are the most bipartisan committees in Congress.

In 2020, I worked with then-ranking member Jon Tester, a Democrat, to pass the Commander John Scott Hannon Veterans Mental Health Care Improvement Act, and when Senator Tester became chairman, I was the ranking member, and we worked to pass the PACT Act.

We were able to work together to pass these bills because it didn't matter which party controlled the Chamber but because we knew we owed veterans the healthcare and benefits they desperately needed, earned, and deserved.

Some of my colleagues would like to see this bill and many others pass without any offset of the costs. That is not and has not been a viable path forward under either Republican or Democratic majorities. For 5 years, under both Republican and Democratic leadership, the Major Richard Star Act has been unable to pass either the House or the Senate, in significant part, due to the inability to offset the cost of the legislation, something required by law.

We can either continue to encounter this same roadblock—we can do this over and over and over again and see the same result—or we can work together to address the concerns that have prevented this bill from passing for the last 5 years.

Lots of sponsors on the Major Richard Star Act, one of the most sponsored pieces of legislation in Congress, but for 5 years it has not become law. It is my goal to change that, and we are developing a path to do exactly that.

The legislation that I plan to introduce pays for the Major Richard Star Act and other bipartisan and bicameral priorities in their entirety. Ensuring that veterans have the care and benefits they have earned is my primary concern. While some of these benefits typically are under the jurisdiction of the Department of Defense and not the Department of Veterans Affairs, we don't let that technicality, that technical jurisdiction, stand in the way of helping veterans.

I choose to lead on this effort because I decided to be an original cosponsor of the Major Richard Star Act, not to cosponsor it for the purpose of saying I cosponsored it but for the purpose of seeing it become law.