

have mocked and derided him. The climate denial machine keeps working its poison. In fact, we just learned that Arch Coal's bankruptcy filing shows they were funding an extremist group dedicated to harassing and threatening scientists.

As the evidence comes in, as every major science agency and organization lines up with all our National Labs and military services and our home State universities across the country, it turns out the mockers and the deniers were wrong. In fact, in all decency, Al Gore deserves an apology, as do the countless men and women who scrutinize these data, who labor in the real science, and who call us to action. If we continue sleepwalking in Congress, we will need to apologize not just to Al Gore but to future generations. We will need to apologize to our own grandchildren for our negligence when we knew better.

So let us wake up from our fossil fuel-funded make-believe and meet our moral obligation.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

BACKPAGE.COM

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, this afternoon the Senate will proceed to a vote on S. Res. 377, a resolution that would hold backpage.com in contempt of Congress for not complying with an investigation being conducted by the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations. Unfortunately, concerns have been raised that the Web site has connections to sex trafficking. Backpage has refused to comply with the subpoena request from the subcommittee. We all know that sex trafficking is a heinous, evil practice, and we should not and we will not tolerate it.

In 2012 I sponsored an amendment to the Violence Against Women Act that included a sense of Congress demanding that the owners of backpage.com remove the adult services section of their Web site.

Last year this Chamber passed the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act, and it was signed into law by President Obama in the spring. This law contains language offered by Senator KIRK from Illinois which gives law enforcement officials additional tools to prosecute individuals such as those behind backpage.com who knowingly facilitate the sale or advertisement of human trafficking victims online.

Today's resolution is another opportunity for the Senate to stand up for the victims of human trafficking.

As a reminder, when we debated the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act,

we talked about the profile of a typical victim of human trafficking—not that any of them are typical, but on average it is a girl between the ages of 12 and 14. This is a horrific business and sordid business, and I encourage every Member to support this resolution.

I thank the chairman of the subcommittee, Senator PORTMAN from Ohio, who has been working tirelessly to highlight this issue and bring it to the Senate's full attention. I am grateful for his bipartisan efforts and strong leadership and look forward to voting yes on the resolution later today.

FILLING THE SUPREME COURT VACANCY

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, on another matter, we all know that yesterday President Obama exercised his authority under the U.S. Constitution to suggest to the Senate a nominee for the Supreme Court of the United States. During the announcement, President Obama spent time talking about the serious task of selecting a Supreme Court nominee, particularly one to succeed a legal lion such as Justice Scalia, whom the President appropriately called one of the most influential jurists of our time. His point was that the Supreme Court of the United States—the highest Court in the land—is an institution of unparalleled importance. What happens at the Supreme Court affects the lives of every American. So lifetime appointments to this most powerful Court in the land should not be taken lightly. As the President put it, our Supreme Court Justices have been given the role as the “final arbiters of American law” for more than 200 years. Of course, today they consider and answer some of the most pressing and challenging controversies and questions of our time. I agree with what the President said to that point.

We all know the Supreme Court is critical to our form of self-government and our democracy, and the role it serves is an essential one. When it plays a role our Founders did not intend, it really undermines respect for the rule of law and for the Court as an institution. So the selection of the next Supreme Court Justice should be handled thoroughly and thoughtfully.

I understand the President is taking his authority seriously, but under the same Constitution—the same Constitution that gives the President the authority to nominate a person to fill this vacancy—that same Constitution has a separate responsibility for the U.S. Senate either to grant or to withhold consent to that nomination.

With the passing of Justice Scalia, the Senate must exercise its constitutional authority as well. Regardless of how we come down on the controversy of the day with regard to when this vacancy should be filled, we all take this responsibility seriously, and because of that, I believe we should follow the examples set by the minority leader, Senator REID; the senior Senator from New

York, Mr. SCHUMER; and Vice President BIDEN when he was chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee—their admonitions made over the years when they were in the majority—and not move forward with the President's nominee at this time.

I think it is only a matter of fundamental fairness to apply the same rules to the same situation no matter who is in the majority and who is in the minority. When they were in the majority, they argued that these vacancies should not be filled the last year of the President's term of office. JOE BIDEN did that in 1992 during the Presidency of George Herbert Walker Bush. Senator REID made that same argument when George W. Bush was President of the United States. And in 2007, 18 months before George W. Bush left office, Senator SCHUMER, the heir apparent to the Democratic leader, said there should be a presumption against confirmation. So it is only fair to play by the same set of rules which they themselves advocated.

Based on the conduct, based on the behavior of our Democratic colleagues when they were in the majority—well, first when they were in the minority, when they filibustered judges for the first time, and later when they were in the majority, before they saw the majority flip to Republicans, the Democratic leader packed the DC Circuit Court of Appeals by invoking the so-called nuclear option, breaking the Senate rules in a raw display of political power in order to pack a court that many people call the second most important court in the land. So this lifetime appointment to the Court is a critical check on the executive branch—a check this administration has proved over and over again we need desperately.

As others and I pointed out long before the President announced this nominee, this nomination will change the ideological balance of the Supreme Court for a generation. Justice Scalia served for 30 years. Because of that, because of all of this, I believe the American people should have their voices heard in the selection of the next Supreme Court nominee. We have already undertaken the process here of the Democrats choosing their nominee for President, and Republicans are doing the same. There is simply too much at stake to leave this decision in the hands of a President who is headed out the door—a decision that will have dramatic consequences on the balance of the Court and the direction of the country for a generation to come.

I believe we should listen to the voices of the American people and allow them to cast their vote and to raise their voice and determine who will make that selection.

I know there have been some members of the press who have asked: Well, if not now, how about in a lameduck session of the Congress; that is, after the election and before the new President is confirmed?

I think that is a terrible idea. If you believe in the principle that the American peoples' voice ought to be heard, it makes no sense to have an election and then to do it and not honor their selection.

So I know some have expressed some concern about that. I, for one, believe we ought to be consistent. That consistent position and the consistent principle are that the American people deserve to be heard and their voice heeded on who makes that selection to something as important as filling this vacancy on the Supreme Court.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. CANTWELL. 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 MERRICK GARLAND

Ms. CANTWELL. Madam President, yesterday President Obama nominated Federal appeals court judge Merrick Garland to fill the vacancy left by the death of Associate Justice Scalia. The President has done his job. Now it is time for the Senate to do ours, to use advice and consent on this nominee, not to treat that as an option but as an obligation.

It is my sincere hope that in the coming days and weeks, all of my Senate colleagues will join me in meeting the nominee and evaluating him based on his merits and on his record and that Republican objections about this individual be laid aside so that at least they can look at his qualifications, his judicial temperament, and his record.

Chief Judge Garland has served the U.S. Court of Appeals since 1997. Let me stress that he has served on this important court for almost 20 years. He was previously at a law firm as a partner. He served as U.S. attorney for the District of Columbia and as Deputy Assistant Attorney General in the Criminal Division of the U.S. Department of Justice. Finally, he served as a U.S. circuit judge earlier in his career.

He is highly qualified as a nominee. America deserves to have a fully functioning court, and they deserve to have Senators who will do their job in reviewing this nominee. The Supreme Court cases that impact our fundamental rights and our operations of government—including the extent of property rights, privacy rights, the balance between civil liberty and national security, how to ensure equal protection under the law, and how to guarantee adequate and due process—are all things that deserve to have a full Supreme Court.

We need a fully functioning Court to keep the balance that we have in our system—the checks and balances

throughout our government. We cannot delay the consideration of this Supreme Court nominee.

President Obama had an obligation to fill this vacancy on the Court. He did so by making this nomination. His duty does not end just because this is an election year.

The Senate has a constitutional obligation now to provide the advice and consent to the President on this nominee. That is a job that we should all take very seriously. The American people deserve no less. In fact, the Supreme Court Justice who grew up in the State of Washington, William O. Douglas, was nominated and confirmed within 16 days. That is right—16 days.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt nominated Justice Douglas on March 20, 1939, to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court on a seat vacated by Justice Brandeis. Justice Douglas was confirmed by the Senate on April 4, 1939. He went on to serve on the Supreme Court for 36 years.

So it can be done. While I am not saying it has to be done in the short amount of time that took—16 days—I do believe that we can get this nominee done in an efficient time. If you look at the record of most of the Supreme Court nominees, it has been, on average, 70 days. So we have plenty of time to make this consideration and make this decision. Yet Senate Republicans have manufactured their own artificial barrier to this debate of the Supreme Court nominee, basically saying that they don't believe we have to take up consideration of this issue.

I am asking them: Please, take Judge Garland's phone calls. Please make your schedule available to meet with him. When we return, please schedule a hearing to consider his nomination. Then, do what the American people want us to do; that is, do our job and actually vote on consideration of Judge Garland. This is in the interest of the American people. I know that Senate Republicans want to say they want to wait. But we cannot wait a full year to get another nominee on the Court.

The Senate has confirmed Supreme Court Justices in the final year of a Presidency more than a dozen times. During the last year of President Reagan's final term, Justice Kennedy was unanimously confirmed by a Democratic-controlled Senate. So the Republicans on the other side of the aisle, and many out there in the party, are saying they want to just allow a minority to drive the interests of the party and delay, delay, delay.

Well, in my opinion, you are delaying justice. In fact, you are taking some of the gridlock that has existed in this building and are just moving it across the street to the Supreme Court. We cannot have delays and gridlock in our judicial system. We need to do our job and move through this process. Today, I am urging my colleagues to have a hearing, ask the tough questions, and finally hold a vote.

Let's show the American people that we can do our job and that we can vote

for or against this nominee. But you have to first meet with him, take his phone calls, and schedule a hearing.

The Seattle Times recently wrote: "The hyperpartisan milieu of Congress this election year must not thwart the framers' intent."

The Olympian newspaper in our State wrote:

The Republican Party's intransigence in Congress is legendary. But the new refusal to consider any appointment of a new justice to the U.S. Supreme Court by President Obama is an outright abuse of power.

So, if the other side continues to refuse a nominee until a new President is sworn in, it would mark the longest period in the history of the Senate, since the Civil War, to fill a vacancy. All the positions on the Supreme Court are essential. My constituents and people all across America expect the Senate to do its job, regardless of whether it is an election year or not.

So I hope that, as our forefathers and Framers of our Constitution put together a government that works, those here in the Senate will take the phone calls of Judge Garland, take the meetings, schedule a hearing, and make sure that we vote on this nominee this year.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

AIRPORT AND AIRWAY EXTENSION ACT OF 2016

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 4721, which was received from the House.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 4721) to amend title 49, United States Code, to extend authorizations for the airport improvement program, to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to extend the funding and expenditure authority of the Airport and Airway Trust Fund, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the Thune-Hatch-Nelson-Wyden substitute amendment be agreed to; that the bill, as amended, be read a third time and passed; and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

The amendment (No. 3457) in the nature of a substitute was agreed to, as follows:

(Purpose: In the nature of a substitute)

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following: