

to get a mortgage. What did he do? He reversed a recent decision by the Department of Housing and Urban Development to reduce annual insurance premiums that many borrowers pay, saving new homeowners an average of \$500 per year. What a terrible thing to do to homeowners. President Trump, with a flick of the pen, ended that new policy, making it harder for Americans of modest means to obtain their piece of the rock, the American dream: their own home. It took only an hour after his positive words on the inaugural platform for his words to ring hollow. And actions speak louder than words. One hour after talking about helping working people and ending the cabal in Washington that hurts people, he signs a regulation that makes it more expensive for new homeowners to buy mortgages—1 hour later.

I ask the American people—because we Democrats are going to do this. We are going to hold the President accountable. Look at what the President said and then an hour later, look at what the President did. Again, actions speak louder than words. The words on that inaugural platform in relation to this new action ring hollow.

Democrats agree with President Trump on this: The working men and women of America do not need more promises, they need policies that give them a leg up, help them succeed, help them afford a home, for instance. We urge President Trump to reverse this decision and give new homeowners across America their \$500 back.

#### CABINET NOMINEES

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, on another matter—nominations—Senators on both sides of the aisle have expressed support for the President's key national security nominees. This evening, we expect to be able to vote on General Kelly and General Mattis, and we look forward to beginning the debate on Congressman POMPEO in the hopes that he can also receive a quick vote, but from there, we intend to have a full and rigorous debate on the President-elect's remaining nominees.

My friends on the other side of the aisle did not want to have a full debate on the merits of these nominees in committee, so they should be prepared to do so on the Senate floor. Over the last several weeks, Republicans have made a mockery of the Cabinet hearing process, trying to jam through nominees in truncated hearings—nominees with serious conflicts of interest and ethical issues unresolved—without giving Senators and the American people a fair chance to question and hear from these nominees.

If ever there were a group of Cabinet nominees who cry out for rigorous scrutiny, it is this one. I have never heard such a parade of potential ethical violations. The President-elect's Cabinet is a swamp Cabinet, full of billionaires and bankers, loaded with conflicts of interest and ethical lapses as far as the eye can see.

Congressman MULVANEY failed to pay taxes on a household worker—the exact same issue that has caused past nominees to withdraw.

Congressman PRICE is facing serious scrutiny for trading stock with one hand and pushing legislation to boost that stock with the other.

Rex Tillerson has refused to recuse himself from matters relating to ExxonMobil for the length of his term.

Just yesterday we learned that Steve Mnuchin tried to hide his holdings in the Cayman Islands from the Senate Finance Committee.

And, of course, at the top of the list is Betsy DeVos. Her ethics paperwork just came in after the hearing was completed. Did she not want to answer any questions on it? It shows that she was invested in multiple education companies, including companies that have millions of dollars of contracts with the Department of Education to collect on student debt. Senators have not been given an opportunity to question her about these investments because we only got the information after the hearing. Sadly, the list goes on and on.

The President-elect isn't draining the swamp with his Cabinet picks, he is filling it up. It is no wonder that the American people have expressed discontent with how this transition period is going.

These issues that I mentioned, and many others, deserve to be thoroughly and rigorously reviewed by the Senate. If Senate Republicans will not let that happen in hearings, it will happen right here on the floor.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader.

#### UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—EXECUTIVE NOMINATIONS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session for the en bloc consideration of the following nominations received today: James N. Mattis to be Secretary of Defense; and John F. Kelly to be Secretary of Homeland Security. I ask consent that there be 20 minutes of debate on the nominations, equally divided in the usual form, and that following the use or yielding back of time, the Senate vote on the nominations in the order listed with no intervening action or debate; that if confirmed, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table en bloc; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; that no further motions be in order; and that any statements relating to the nominations be printed in the RECORD.

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. MCCONNELL. 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.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I renew my unanimous consent request that I previously stated.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### EXECUTIVE SESSION

#### NOMINATIONS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following nominations, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nominations of James Mattis, of Washington, to be Secretary of Defense; and John F. Kelly, of Virginia, to be Secretary of Homeland Security.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, let me just, for the information of all Members, point out that after we vote on Mattis and Kelly, we will turn to the Pompeo nomination, begin that debate, and hopefully finish it at some point tonight.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, there is not a lot of benefit in being around here for a long period of time, but I remember very well in January of 2009, when the new President of the United States and, in a spirit of enthusiasm and bipartisanship, the Senate, on the first day of the inauguration, approved of seven Cabinet members, seven—not two, as we are presently contemplating, but seven. All of those individuals, as I recall, had some degree of concern about them, had some degree of controversy—some more, some less. But the fact is, we moved forward and almost unanimously voted in favor of these Cabinet members for the simple reason that the American people had spoken, and we had a new President of a different party, and we ought to give that President the team that he needed in order to get his job done.

Now, the one difference between what I have seen here in 2017, since 2009, is that the world is on fire. Look at the world today, and look at a map of it in 2009. There weren't 6 million refugees out of Syria. There weren't 400,000 people murdered by Bashar al-Assad with the assistance of Vladimir Putin and the Iranian Revolutionary Guard. We didn't have Russians using precision-guided weapons, striking hospitals in Aleppo, slaughtering innocent men, women, and children. We didn't have the Chinese acting in the most belligerent fashion in the South China Sea, asserting their sovereignty over an