

Senate Judiciary Committee unanimously reported the next Director of the USPTO, Andrei Iancu. As a long-time champion of intellectual property rights, and head of the High-Tech Task Force, I encourage my colleagues to swiftly confirm him to this post.

Overall, this President has delivered on his nominations, and his nominees have delivered on his promises. While I am on the topic of nominations, I want to talk about the judiciary. Controversy seems to be swirling, due to a few recent—and I would say unfortunate—bumps in the road, but we must not miss the forest no matter how much the press would like to harken on a few of the trees. The accomplishments of this administration and Senate in addressing the judiciary have been historic.

Neil Gorsuch was a superb choice for the Supreme Court. At a critical juncture for our courts, he stands poised to seize the mantle left by Justice Antonin Scalia and carry the cause of originalism and textualism forward for a new generation, but Justice Gorsuch was only the beginning. From the circuit courts to the district courts, judicial nominations across the board have really been outstanding. We have confirmed more circuit court nominees this year than in any President's first year in American history.

We accomplished this despite Democrats using their time-tested obstruction tactics and even coming up with some new ones. They forced us to take 18 cloture votes on judicial nominees alone this year, compared to just one cloture vote during the first year of all previous Presidents combined. Nevertheless, we got the job done. The results will be felt for decades to come.

Whatever our differences on other issues, conservatives across the board heartily approve of the way this administration has handled judicial nominations.

I will continue to work with my colleagues in the Senate Judiciary Committee, as well as Leader MCCONNELL, to confirm these judges. As the rest of our agenda gains steam, judicial selection will remain the vanguard. There are more judges to come this new year, and we are going to keep on confirming them. Each and every week, a new trial or appellate court judge will add to the ranks of a rapidly improving judiciary.

Finally, on the legislative front, this administration and Republican Congress have just delivered the most consequential and far-reaching tax reform package in 30 years. When other administrations and other sessions of Congress couldn't get it done, we did. Individuals will see their tax rates drop. Businesses, from large corporations that employ thousands to small businesses paying passthrough rates, will enjoy new capital for investment, expansion, and more. In fact, seemingly to the dismay of our Democratic colleagues, businesses are already responding to the good news with announcements of bonuses and new ventures, and that is just the beginning.

On top of it all, the individual mandate has been repealed and ObamaCare is now firmly on its way out, thank goodness. Despite earlier difficulties, we are well on our way toward repeal. As we move toward 2018, we can look forward to additional policy success on everything from entitlements to infrastructure to immigration.

In conclusion, I don't want to hear anyone claim that this President and this Congress have not gotten things done. Promises were made and promises were kept. Only a year into things, we are making good on our pledge for historic change in Washington.

NOMINATION OF RYAN NELSON

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, on another matter, I would like to offer a few words of support for the nomination of Ryan Nelson to be the Solicitor for the Department of Interior.

Mr. Nelson has a distinguished legal background. He has worked in both the private and public sector, including in all three branches of the Federal Government. Most importantly, he is respected by those members of the Idaho State Bar who know him best.

He has been endorsed by numerous colleagues representing a broad spectrum of political views. Mr. Nelson's exemplary legal background makes him ideally suited to serve as the Department of Interior's Solicitor, and we owe the people of Utah and the West the opportunity to confirm him at once.

Once confirmed, I am very eager to work with Mr. Nelson and Secretary Ryan Zinke to continue a shared mission of restoring trust between the Federal Government and the people of the West.

There have been some marvelous changes this year, and there will be even more if we could just work together and quit all the bumbling around here as though we hate each other. I am grateful for my colleagues on both sides of the aisle. I believe we have made important strides this year, and I think we can make even more. I am grateful for what we have been able to get done this year.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. CASEY. Thank you, Mr. President.

I ask to speak in morning business.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator is recognized.

NATIONAL SECURITY

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I rise this morning to outline some ideas about our national security as we approach the end of the year.

Many Americans are heading into the holiday season with some very reasonable fears about the threats facing our Nation. In 2017, we saw an emboldened North Korean regime testing missiles and nuclear weapons. Terrorist groups

continue to execute attacks across the globe. Violent state and nonstate actors continue to destabilize Syria, Afghanistan, Ukraine, Yemen, Nigeria, and others. We saw Russia continue meddling in elections, just as they did in ours last year.

This is a year of great volatility and uncertainty. However, we also saw the U.S. military leading an international coalition that is loosening the stranglehold ISIS had on parts of Iraq and Syria. We saw the recovery of American hostages, including constituents of mine, held captive for years by terrorists. In Europe, U.S. and NATO forces partnered to counter Russian aggression and dispel propaganda. U.S. development assistance projects helped hundreds of millions of people across the world, including 11 million farmers and 27½ million children under the Feed the Future Program.

Even when it seemed like there were many reasons to be afraid, the U.S. military, diplomats, and development professionals were responsible for a lot of good progress this year.

On Monday of this week, President Trump laid out his administration's national security strategy. I commend the work of the national security professionals who crafted the document which warrants a thorough review. It is a substantial body of work, but it paints a very dark picture of the world and our role in it.

A little more than 2 years ago, I stood on this floor and invoked the words of Senator Vandenberg—the Senator from Michigan back in the World War II era—for “maximum united effort” and Senator Vandenberg's admonition that politics should stop at the water's edge. When I spoke these words, this was at a time when it seemed the only response my Republican colleagues had to the Obama administration's foreign policy moves was categorical condemnation.

I will not categorically condemn the administration's new strategy, but I will pose a challenge to reject the false choice between investing at home and engaging abroad; utilize our diplomatic and development toolkit as much, if not more, than we exercise our defense capabilities; lead by example. The world will indeed become a dark place if we hide America's light under a bushel basket, to use words from Scripture.

In the face of our adversaries' aggression, we can choose between competition and cooperation. The new strategy outlined by the administration references competition nearly three times more than cooperation. I suggest to the administration the words of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who said: “Competition has been shown to be useful up to a certain point and no further, but cooperation, which is a thing we must strive for today, begins where competition leaves off.”

Mr. President, I yield to the distinguished Democratic leader.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

THANKING THE SENATOR FROM PENNSYLVANIA

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I very much thank my friend from Pennsylvania. As always, he is a gentleman as well as a great legislator and great leader. I meant those words very sincerely, unrelated to his yielding to me.

FUNDING THE GOVERNMENT

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, on year-end issues, we are staring down a litany of unresolved issues, and we are quickly running out of time to solve them. Not only do we need to pass an extension of government funding, but as I have said many times, we need to deal with budget caps, CHIP, community health centers, 702 FISA, a disaster supplemental, and of course the Dreamers.

I believe we could have resolved all of these issues had my Republican colleagues, especially in the House, not put them on the back burner while jamming through their tax bill. It is unclear still what the House is going to send us to keep the government open and whether it will be acceptable to the Senate.

At the same time, the House may move forward on an unacceptable disaster supplemental which still does not treat fairly California, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. It doesn't include, as best we know—they are still working on it—cost sharing for Puerto Rico and additional funding for Medicaid, mitigation resiliency, and drinking water infrastructure. While House Republicans included some tax provisions in the disaster supplemental, they failed to extend the ITC for Puerto Rico, extend the childcare tax credit consistent with other States, and the tax bill also includes a devastating new business tax that treats Puerto Rico as if it is a foreign country, which could encourage manufacturers to leave the island. This tax could cost thousands of jobs and decimate Puerto Rico's economy at exactly the time when Puerto Rico is hurting from the hurricanes and needs all the help it can get. Those issues must be fixed before a disaster supplemental can move forward. Because of these inadequacies, the disaster supplemental may have to slip to next year. I think we can work it out in a bipartisan way—I certainly do—but just jamming it through without consulting us and not being fair to so many other parts of the country doesn't make sense.

Unfortunately, we still have not reached a deal yet on the Dreamers, who are very important not only to my caucus, not only to some on the Republican side but to the American people.

They have overwhelming support. These kids were brought here very young, through no fault of their own. They learn in our schools, work at our companies, serve in our military, and pledge allegiance to our flag. They are Americans in every single important way but one—their paperwork. This is an issue we have a moral imperative to solve here in Congress.

Democrats want to make sure that we have equal bargaining, and we are not going to allow things like disaster relief go forward without discussing some of the other issues we care about that I have mentioned. We have to solve these issues together, even if that means passing a clean, short-term CR extension of government funding with some anomalies—we always understand there always have to be some anomalies but not those that change the structure—and continuing the negotiations into January.

REPUBLICAN TAX BILL

Mr. SCHUMER. Now, Mr. President, on tax. Earlier this week, the Senate passed one of the worst pieces of legislation in at least a decade, maybe longer. The Republican tax bill will go down in history as a rushed, sloppy, partisan rewrite of the Tax Code that benefited those who already have so much while doing little or hurting those who have too little. It will be remembered as throwing the extraordinary income inequality we see today into overdrive and fulfilling very few of the ambitious Republican promises about growth, job creation, and deficit reduction. But perhaps most of all, the Republican tax bill will define the Republican Party as the party of the rich and powerful, the party against the middle class, and that will be a rubric we will hear from now until next November and even further on.

Yesterday in the Oval Office, President Trump admitted that cutting the corporate tax rate was “probably the biggest factor in our plan.” Despite all his rhetoric about this being a middle-class tax bill, as soon as it passes, he admits that lowering the corporate rate was the Republicans' primary goal.

As corporations get a massive, permanent tax break, individuals will get small and temporary ones. By 2027, 145 million American families making under \$200,000—83 percent of the middle class—will be either paying more in taxes or get a cut of less than \$100. That is according to the Joint Committee on Taxation—no partisan affiliation. Meanwhile, the top 1 percent of income earners in our country will reap 83 percent of the benefits from this tax plan. Those facts are what make this bill so dramatically unpopular with the American people by a 2-to-1 margin in some polls, and next year the American people will have the opportunity to reject this bill and move our country in a different direction.

SPECIAL COUNSEL MUELLER

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, on Special Prosecutor Mueller, I want to take a moment to praise my friend from Virginia, Senator MARK WARNER, vice chair of the Senate Intelligence Committee, for his speech yesterday about Special Counsel Mueller. It was an eloquent speech. I would like to associate myself with the substance of his fine remarks. If the President were to fire Special Counsel Mueller, our country would face a constitutional crisis. As my colleague from Virginia said, it would cross a redline. Additionally, there are steps below that brash and brazen act that would also cross redlines here in Congress, as Senator WARNER noted, including the use of the Presidential pardon on members of the Trump campaign who have been convicted, whether those pardons are intended to subvert the investigation or prevent testimony and further cooperation.

So I say to my colleagues, just as firing Special Prosecutor Mueller would cross a redline, so would pardoning people like Manafort and Flynn. The bottom line is this: President Trump must allow this investigation to proceed without a scintilla of interference. He would be wise to listen to Senator WARNER's speech yesterday and act accordingly.

THE REPUBLICAN-LED SENATE

Mr. SCHUMER. Finally, Mr. President, since this is the last time I might be able to address this Chamber before the end of the year—let's hope so—I would like to look back at what the Senate has accomplished this year. The long and short of it, though, is that the Senate has not accomplished much to be proud of.

Despite winning only a slim majority in the last election—a condition that made this year ripe for cooperation between the parties—the Republicans used their power not to seek consensus or bipartisanship but, rather, to try to jam through a partisan agenda.

My friend the majority leader once promised that if he were ever given the majority, he would return the body to regular order. He cautioned against the Senate becoming an “assembly line for one party's partisan legislative agenda.” That is what MITCH MCCONNELL said a few years ago. Sadly, that is exactly what the Senate has become under his leadership this year. For a man who professed to love the Senate and relish bipartisanship, this is probably the most partisan Senate that I have served in in all the years I have been here, and we have departed from regular order and the customs of the Senate in ways never seen before. For what end? Well, this Chamber, under Republican leadership, has devoted itself to furthering the interests of the wealthy and powerful, while ignoring or harming the interests of the middle class and working America.