

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.