

Republicans will argue that they had a great year, pointing to three things—Judge Gorsuch, the use of the Congressional Review Act to roll back regulations, and their tax bill. All three of those things help the rich and they will help corporations, but they won't help the middle class.

Senate Republicans engaged in historic obstruction to keep a Supreme Court seat open so the Heritage Foundation and Federalist Society could pick a Justice who would rule on the side of corporations instead of people.

Senate Republicans jammed through Congressional Review Act bills that rolled back protections for women, students, and workers, while lifting requirements placed on bad actors in the big oil, gas, mining, and gun industries.

They capped the year by passing a tax bill that provides huge tax breaks for the rich and biggest corporations, while providing crumbs and even tax hikes for the middle class.

They tried for months to repeal the Affordable Care Act, which would send costs soaring for millions of Americans and cause millions more to lose coverage.

They failed to fully authorize CHIP, the Children's Health Insurance Program, and failed to rebuild our infrastructure, despite the President's promises.

The stock market is up, but wages are flat or nearly flat. The President and Republicans promised that they would stop outsourcing, and that hasn't happened. Even companies the President said he would personally save have sent jobs to Mexico, leaving families in the Midwest and across the country without the income they need this holiday season.

Time and time again, the middle class was an afterthought or simply forgotten by Senate Republicans and President Trump. That has been the story of the year. Republicans haven't accomplished much, but what they have accomplished has only benefited the wealthy and well connected.

The Senate's record this year has exposed the faux populism at the center of President Trump's political identity. Although he rode into office promising to help the forgotten man and woman, those are exactly the people he has forgotten, abandoning them in favor of wealthy special interests. Populism, unfortunately, under President Trump, has been traded for plutocracy.

The millions of Americans in 2016 who were frustrated at a Washington that didn't work for them feel more frustrated today, and the millions of working men and women who voted for President Trump—many of them are already feeling betrayed.

We hope that the future will be different and that our Republican friends realize that their legislative and political goals are better served by bipartisanship and compromise rather than gridlock and strife. If they do, we are willing and ready to work with them, but if they don't, voters will have a

chance to move our country in a dramatically different direction in 2018. We are already seeing a yearning for that new direction in elections in Virginia, New Jersey, Tennessee, and even in deep red Alabama. If the Republicans continue to hurt the middle class and give handouts to big corporations and the wealthy, they are in for a reckoning next November.

I yield the floor, and I thank my colleague from Pennsylvania for his courtesy.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

NATIONAL SECURITY

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I want to thank the Democratic leader for his remarks.

When I was speaking a few moments ago about national security, I had made a suggestion to the administration that there is a national security strategy that has been outlined and that the administration reject the false choice between investing at home and engaging abroad and make sure that they utilize our diplomatic and development toolkits as much as if not more than they exercise our defense capabilities.

We have major challenges, and that is why I think it is important to outline this morning some of those challenges and some of our responses as we head into the new year.

Just for discussion purposes, I wanted to paint the picture of a nation that—it doesn't describe one nation, but I think we can imagine a country that fits this description or at least a number of countries that might. Imagine a sovereign state, a member of the United Nations, a nation whose leaders are singularly focused on staying in power and who will do anything to remain in power, including undermining their colleagues and erstwhile friends. In this country I am describing, those who speak truth to power are dismissed, ridiculed, or, at worst, treated as criminals. This particular country or profile of a country looks inward, putting its domestic troubles first as its reputation in the world declines. Out of fear of its near-peer competitors, the country retreats from diplomatic engagement and doubles down on military capabilities. Does this sound familiar? It might to some. It may describe a number of countries in whole or in part.

Of course, there are a number of countries that fit this description. Certainly, the dictatorial regimes that rule North Korea, Syria, and Iran prioritize self-preservation over the welfare of their citizens. In Russia and China, journalists and opposition leaders are regularly silenced, jailed, or worse.

Here in the United States, we are going through an especially turbulent chapter in the American story. As we celebrate the holidays, we might be dreading the inevitable political de-

bates with family members or friends whose views differ from ours. However, in that fictitious, oppressive country that I described earlier, you can't have these debates, or you can try, but you won't last too long because the authorities will come knocking.

That is what is great about our country. The United States is the land of the free and the home of the brave, and I am reminded of that every time I meet with servicemembers and veterans who are willing to put their lives on the line every day to defend our inalienable rights to criticize and to disagree with our leaders.

So what about this new strategy that the administration just outlined this week? This new strategy states, in pertinent part, that "America possesses unmatched political, economic, military, and technological advantages." That is what the strategy says, and that is certainly true. But I think we should add a few other advantages, even attributes, that are part of the American story, part of the American advantage.

Certainly, our history of generosity sets us apart from the world, a tradition of pluralism as well, the freedom to debate and dissent without fear, the respect for the rule of law, and finally a culture of innovation unmatched anywhere in the world. As I have said before, Americans don't wait for the future; we invent the future.

Through the execution of its strategy, the administration has an opportunity to invent the future of our Nation, as well as its role in the world—a future where the American economy is firing on all cylinders, where investments here at home lift up everyone, where our researchers and manufacturers lead the world in the production of cutting-edge technologies.

For the last 11 months, this administration has sent the world mixed signals about what "America first" really means, from pulling out of the Paris climate agreement, to threatening to walk away from NATO, to hollering out the State Department. I believe the strategy implementation presents an opportunity to reverse that course. We cannot turn away from the world and try to go it alone. We should ask our allies, certainly, to pull their weight and pay their fair share. Whether it is NATO or the counter-ISIS coalition, the United States can always press our partners to do more, but not by threatening that we will abandon these alliances or by creating any uncertainty about these alliances. Simply put, we need partners to tackle some of the greatest threats facing our Nation and the world.

Let's go through a couple of them.

North Korea is first on the list. The North Korean regime is unpredictable and armed with nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons and the means to deliver them. Just across the demilitarized zone are tens of thousands of U.S. forces and our South Korean allies. Just across the water are more

U.S. military personnel and our Japanese allies. This regime is a significant threat—the North Korean regime. It is a threat exacerbated by reckless ridicule, bombastic statements, and ill-considered tweets. One miscalculation can be disastrous. The administration should accelerate serious, sober diplomacy in lockstep with our allies. For the New Year, let's agree to a new rule for all of us—both branches of government: Leave the tweets for domestic policy only. Sound foreign policy and security policy cannot be done in 280 characters.

Congress has offered the administration powerful leverage in this circumstance in the form of several pieces of legislation. First, the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act passed this summer, and the Banking Restrictions Involving North Korea Act is pending before the Senate now. I support these tough, bipartisan sanctions measures because I believe turning the economic screws, coupled with genuine diplomacy, can yield results. In the New Year, I urge the President to tone down the rhetoric and to empower the Secretary of State and our senior diplomats to find a diplomatic path toward a stable North Korea that doesn't threaten the United States or our allies.

How about terrorist groups around the world? Over the last 16 years, the U.S. military, the intelligence community, and our homeland security professionals have worked hand in hand to meet the rise of terrorist groups head on. We owe the men and women in uniform a debt of gratitude for tirelessly leading the coalition fight that has rolled back ISIS's territorial gains. Implementing the administration's new strategy and its call to fight terrorism at its source is not just about the military fight. The United States should also lead the international community in addressing the underlying issues that drive terrorist recruitment and help to rebuild communities newly liberated from terrorist control.

Think about this. More than 65 million people around the world are displaced from their homes right now. There is no purely military solution for this refugee crisis. A successful counterterrorism strategy requires us to work with our partners for information sharing and for contributions of development assistance.

Another trouble spot in the world is Syria. In Syria, the connection between instability, displacement, and terrorism is clear. This conflict has been raging for nearly 7 years. In the absence of U.S. engagement on a political solution to this crisis, regional powers—namely, Russia, Iran, and Turkey—have run the table, to the benefit of the murderous Assad regime and at the expense of the Syrian people. The United States has abdicated its leadership role and ceded control of the outcome to nations with interests often in direct conflict with our own.

Recently, we learned that the administration will endorse a political tran-

sition plan that leaves Bashar al-Assad in power for at least another 4 years. This is unacceptable and dangerous. Assad is responsible for terrible war crimes that led to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Syrians and the displacement of millions more. The strategy outlined by the administration says: "We will seek a settlement to the Syrian civil war that sets the conditions for refugees to return home and rebuild their lives and safety."

I agree with that goal. Most people would agree with that goal, but the administration has missed the bigger picture. We need a strategy that pushes back on Russian and Iranian influence in Syria and addresses the underlying grievances that led to the conflict in the first place.

Let me move to Iran. The Iranian regime remains a powerful force for instability in the Middle East, especially through its support of terrorist proxies and militias. We know that the Iranians want to maintain control of territory linking Tehran with Beirut. So they will continue to act against U.S. interests in Iraq and Syria. Here, again, Congress has offered powerful tools to the administration in the form of the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act.

The nuclear deal with Iran is giving us an unprecedented visibility on the Iranian nuclear program, but the multilateral diplomatic channels built alongside that agreement have atrophied under this administration. Every time the President threatens to walk away from the Iran nuclear deal, he sends a clear signal to our allies and adversaries alike: U.S. commitments are written in disappearing ink.

If the administration wants to get tough on Iran's nonnuclear bad behavior, there are concrete steps to take today:

No. 1, work with our allies to step up maritime interdictions of any illicit weapons traffic to or from Iran.

No. 2, push the Europeans to do more to combat the financial networks that enrich the Iranian terrorist proxy, Hezbollah. My bipartisan Stop Terrorist Operational Resources and Money Act, or the so-called STORM Act, which is bipartisan, could help with that.

No. 3, begin diplomatic conversations with our allies about a multilateral strategy to curtail the Iranian ballistic missile program.

All of these efforts take cooperation with our allies, which the President makes harder every time he calls into question the future of the nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

Finally, as to Russia and China, the new strategy by this administration repeatedly describes Russia and China as our competitors. Let me be clear. These countries are not our friends. They actively work against U.S. interests. They are threatened by American military dominance and economic power, and both are trying to game the system to undermine our advantages.

China systemically, perniciously games the international trade system to its advantage. I firmly believe American workers and industry can outinnovate and outproduce any others in the world when the playing field is level. Driven by similar motives, Russia has meddled in elections across the Western world, trying to undermine confidence in one of our most fundamental institutions of democracy. Again, there are concrete steps the administration can take to counter these threats from both China and Russia: No. 1, shore up our electoral systems and help others do the same; No. 2, counter propaganda; No. 3, fight corruption; and No. 4, get serious about holding trade cheaters like China accountable.

Through engagement and cooperation, we can lead the rest of the world away from the Cold War-era clash of major powers that Russia and China want to create.

In conclusion, if this outline of some of the threats and challenges posed seems like a tremendous challenge—a great challenge for our Nation—it is because it always has been so. It has always been a challenge.

President Truman once said:

America was not built on fear. America was built on courage, on imagination and on unbeatable determination to do the job at hand.

When faced with a challenge, whether it is Pennsylvanians or Americans, we don't shrink inward. We step up. Our adversaries want us to be divided and dispirited. These adversaries underestimate the courage, the imagination, and the determination of the American people.

President Trump might see it differently, but as we close out 2017, I see a world that needs American leadership more than ever. To paraphrase President Kennedy, we should seek not a Pax Americana enforced on the world by American weapons of war but a genuine peace that makes life on Earth worth living. The American people are ready to rise to that challenge. I hope the administration is too.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SULLIVAN). The majority whip.

SENATE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I would like to speak briefly today about the year we have had here in Washington, DC.

At times along the way, it wasn't easy. There were more than one or two bumps in the road, and there were times when we got discouraged because we weren't able to accomplish everything we wanted to accomplish on the part of the American people. But looking back, I am proud of what we were able to get done.

The first thing is to notice the speed with which President Trump was able to nominate and we were able to confirm Federal judges. Everyone remembers last January when President