

this meeting is fraught with peril. My primary concern is that the President, in his penchant for spur-of-the-moment decision making, could lead the United States into danger in one of two ways.

My first concern is that the President, without a clear or coherent strategy, will buy a pile of magic beans, accepting an agreement—any agreement—that allows him to declare victory. We know what he will say: the greatest compromise ever, greater than Versailles, greater than anything. Talking is good, but it is very far from an agreement to disarm.

President Trump should not accept a deal that doesn't include concrete steps to verifiably roll back North Korea's nuclear and missile programs, including those that threaten our allies and partners. So that is one concern: that the President accepts any agreement because he is just so eager to tout that he was a great deal maker and made an agreement, even if it is a rotten agreement for America.

My second concern is sort of the opposite. My second concern is that the President, without a disciplined or coherent strategy, will walk away from a bilateral meeting if he doesn't get everything he wants. There is also the possibility that the President will walk away from an agreement after the fact if he decides later he is unhappy with it. We have seen him do that on so many occasions. As someone who has negotiated deals with the President, I know it is a very real possibility.

Now, some may say that these are opposite possibilities. They are, in a certain sense. If he takes too little, he walks away because he didn't get everything. But they are all underlined by one coherent fact: There is no strategy—at least apparent to just about everyone.

The President seems to operate on a whim, saying one thing one day and another thing the next. When there is no coherent strategy, each of these dangers is too real. Either scenario could leave relations with a rogue state worse and more dangerous than before.

Now, the President said last night at Mar-a-Lago that he would leave a meeting with Kim Jong Un if it wasn't fruitful.

Mr. President, this is not like a business deal. There is a very real danger to walking away from a meeting with a nuclear-armed dictator. It could risk serious escalation. If the United States is seen as the one walking away from talks, we should be under no illusions that China, Russia, and others will not follow suit.

We all want to see negotiations with North Korea succeed. If it is true that North Korea will take its demand for U.S. troops to leave the Korean Peninsula off the table, that is a good step. Our commitment to the Korean people and our alliances with Korea and Japan are not subject to negotiation. But, I repeat, if these talks are going to truly succeed, the President and his team require a coordinated strategy, some-

thing this administration hasn't been able to show with respect to Russia, Syria, Yemen, the Middle East, and other hotspots around the world.

#### SPECIAL COUNSEL LEGISLATION

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, on another topic, I have come to the floor several times over the past month to document the number of ways in which this administration has signaled a willingness—perhaps a desire—to interfere with Special Counsel Mueller's probe into Russian interference in the 2016 elections.

Beyond troubling statements from the White House Press Secretary and the President's allies in the media, President Trump himself has publicly mused about the firing of the special counsel. So while I appreciate that the majority leader believes the President would be wrong to fire the special counsel, I believe it is a real mistake not to pass legislation to protect the investigation. I sincerely hope Leader MCCONNELL reconsiders his refusal to entertain bringing such a bill to the floor. It is a bipartisan bill.

I have talked to Members on both sides of the aisle who are worried about a constitutional crisis. We all know the consequence of Presidential interference in the Russian probe and how dire it would be for the rule of law, fundamental to our democracy, and the constitutional crisis that it would create should be avoided at all costs. Unfortunately, there is substantial evidence that the President has thought about firing the special counsel more than once in the past and may well do so in the future.

The bipartisan legislation introduced by Senators GRAHAM, COONS, TILLIS, and BOOKER has no real downsides to it. It would simply provide a legal avenue to restore the special counsel if existing DOJ regulations are breached and he is fired for political reasons.

So what is the reason not to do it? Why not head off a constitutional crisis at the pass rather than waiting until it is too late? The rule of law is fundamental to the functioning of our democracy. Why even flirt with the prospect of a President challenging the very nature of our system of government?

So I would urge my friend Leader MCCONNELL to think twice about this—to think not simply about his responsibilities to his party and not simply about doing what the President might want, but to our country and our Constitution. If we think of it in those terms, I think it is inevitable that we would want to pass this legislation. That is because the rule of law is fundamental to the functioning of our democracy. Why even flirt with the prospect of a President challenging the very nature of our system of governance and rules?

So I hope the Judiciary Committee moves forward with the bipartisan bill. I hope there is no attempt to water it

down or to create a back channel for political interference in ongoing investigations. It is clear that several Republicans, including Chairman GRASSLEY, Senator TILLIS, Senator GRAHAM, and others, see a need to pass this legislation. Let them prevail upon the Republican leader to reconsider his position.

I yield the floor.

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. NELSON. Madam 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.

#### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

#### CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

#### EXECUTIVE SESSION

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of JAMES BRIDENSTINE, of Oklahoma, to be Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Florida is recognized.

#### PUERTO RICO BLACKOUT

Mr. NELSON. Madam President, it is hard to believe, but the entire island of Puerto Rico yesterday descended into darkness. An excavation happened to hit a main line that cut out the electricity of the entire island—3½ million people—an island that is not a small island; it is a large island. It was a total blackout. Now, 24 hours later, a large number of the people on the island are still in the dark.

Tomorrow marks 7 months since Hurricane Maria made landfall in Puerto Rico, and yet Puerto Ricans are still dealing with constant setbacks and unreliable power. This is simply unacceptable.

Senator RUBIO and I have asked the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources Committee to conduct an additional oversight hearing on the overall hurricane recovery and get to the bottom of this. I understand this