

Then the Senate will turn to consideration of the judicial nominee, Thomas Farr, to be U.S. District Judge for the Eastern District of North Carolina.

Mr. Farr is a graduate of Hillsdale College, Emory Law School, and Georgetown University. Over a nearly 40-year career in law, he has developed expertise in labor relations and constitutional law. The American Bar Association's Standing Committee on the Federal Judiciary—a body that has frequently been held up by our Democratic colleagues as the gold standard—has awarded Mr. Farr its highest possible rating, unanimously “well qualified.”

Our friend, Senator BURR, has testified that his fellow North Carolinian has “the requisite expertise, character and judgment required for the federal bench” and that “he will serve in this role honorably.”

I urge all of our colleagues to join me in voting to advance his nomination later today.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. 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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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.

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 legislative clerk read the nomination of Karen Dunn Kelley, of Pennsylvania, to be Deputy Secretary of Commerce.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the time until 11 a.m. will be divided between the two leaders or their designees.

The Senator from Illinois.

GUN VIOLENCE AND REMEMBERING POLICE OFFICER SAMUEL JIMENEZ, DR. TAMARA O'NEAL, AND DAYNA LESS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, if I came to the Senate floor each day and told the story of another victim of gun vio-

lence in the city of Chicago, it would be a full-time job. Trend lines are improving ever so slightly, but the deaths from gun violence in that great city continue to break our hearts. Hardly a day, a week, or month goes by that we don't hear another story of some child, innocent bystander, infant, or elderly person victimized by gun violence. Last week, there was an extraordinary event which captured the hearts of the people of Chicago and Illinois.

This Monday afternoon, hundreds of police officers from Chicago and Northern Illinois—and some from as far away as Boston and New York—stood at solemn attention, lining the roadways around the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in the Chicago suburb of Des Plaines.

The night before, a powerful blizzard had dumped 7 inches of snow in the Chicago area. It was very cold, but it was not cold air that caused many of the officers gathered outside the chapel to feel numb. It was grief. They had come to pay their respects to a fallen brother and hero.

Chicago police officer Samuel Jimenez was shot and killed a week earlier when he tried to stop a shooting at Mercy Hospital & Medical Center on the city's South Side.

I am going to put this array of photos up because I want to address each and every one of them, the individuals on there. This is Officer Jimenez. He was 28 years old, married to his high school sweetheart, the loving father of three little kids.

Killed in the same shooting were these two women: Dr. Tamara O'Neal, an emergency room physician, and Dayna Less, a first-year pharmacy resident. Both women worked at Mercy Hospital. The man who shot all three of them also died, from a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head.

Let me speak of this hero and these healers for a moment. Officer Samuel Jimenez was 28 years old, married to his high school sweetheart, Crystal. Together, they had three children—two little girls and a boy. Friends said his eyes lit up whenever anyone asked him about his kids.

Officer Jimenez had been a member of the Chicago Police Department for less than 2 years. He had already earned two honorable mentions for exceptional performance. He and his partner were in their patrol car around 3:30 Monday afternoon, a week ago, November 19. A call came over the police radio about an active shooter at Mercy Hospital. The gunman shot Dr. O'Neal in the parking lot and then ran into the hospital. Officer Jimenez followed. He was shot and killed in the hospital lobby.

The gunman shot Ms. Less as she stepped off an elevator. He then shot and killed himself, after first being shot by a Chicago policeman.

At the funeral, Officer Jimenez was remembered as a loving husband, father, and friend, and as dedicated to protecting others. He grew up in North-

west Chicago, the youngest of nine children. Before joining the police department, he worked at Dunkin' Donuts, bused tables at Moretti's Ristorante & Pizzeria. He even delivered mail in the suburbs. His instructors and classmates at the police training academy remembered him as a stellar recruit, always eager to lend a hand, always there with a warm hello.

He completed his 13-month probationary period with the police department just last August. Officer Jimenez and his partner didn't have to respond at Mercy Hospital. You see, that hospital was outside the district they were assigned to, but they went anyway, not even hesitating for a second because they knew people were in danger.

Dr. Tamara O'Neal was an emergency room doctor. That is one of the hardest, most stressful jobs in the hospital. Dr. O'Neal picked that profession because she thought it was where she could do the most good for people who needed help. She was 38 years old. She joined the staff of Mercy Hospital less than 3 months ago, after a 3-year residency at the University of Illinois at Chicago—the same school where she earned her medical degree.

Her colleagues remember her for her outgoing personality and her willingness to go out of her way to help others. They say she used to stay long after her shift ended to make sure her patients were taken care of. She was also a woman of great faith. She was the choir director of her church in Indiana, and she drove there every Sunday—60 miles each way—to lead the congregation in song. Her brother was the pastor of the church. Dr. O'Neal helped raise money every year to buy school supplies for children in the church whose families were strapped for money. She loved taking her nieces and nephews into the city of Chicago to show them new attractions, new restaurants.

Dayna Less was 24 years old. Had the shooting happened 1 day later, she would still be alive. She was leaving that next day to spend Thanksgiving in Indiana with her family. She graduated from pharmacy school at Purdue last May, after 6 years of study.

She was engaged to be married in June to a young man she met at church camp when they were both just 9 years old. Dayna Less loved the Chicago Cubs, working at Mercy Hospital, and traveling.

Before coming to Mercy, she spent 8 weeks on pharmacy rotation in Kenya. She wrote about her experiences there in a blog. This is part of what she wrote:

Watching patients die from things that would 100 percent be treatable in the US is extremely disheartening.

It's been very important for me to focus on the positive things we are doing here because it can be difficult to see how we are making a difference. But, it's worth it when you fight for something and it actually happens! Even if it's as small as making sure a patient gets their medication, we are doing something that matters.

Officer Jimenez, Dr. O'Neal, and Ms. Less were all doing work that mattered and mattered greatly. All three were dedicated to helping others—Officer Jimenez as a protector, Dr. O'Neal and Ms. Less as healers.

Their deaths have left their friends and families, the Chicago Police Department, and all of the city of Chicago stunned and grieving. There is never—never—a good time to lose a family member to violence but to lose them during the holiday season seems especially cruel. Our hearts go out to Officer Jimenez's family and to the O'Neal and Less families.

Officer Jimenez was the second Chicago police officer killed in the line of duty this year. Last February, the day before Valentine's Day, District Commander Paul Bauer was fatally shot in downtown Chicago. Gun violence against police officers is not just a problem in the city of Chicago; it is a problem across America. It is getting worse.

We all remember the horrific ambush of Dallas police officers in July 2016. Five officers were killed and nine others were injured by a sniper. Since then, 132 police officers have been shot and killed in the line of duty in cities and towns across our country. These are intentional shootings. They are not accidents.

We have seen intentional killings at churches, synagogues, schools, and as we have learned so painfully in the city of Chicago, hospitals. We are seeing an increase in shootings in these locations.

In 2016, U.S. hospitals spent \$1.1 billion to try to make their hospital grounds safer. Think about that: more than \$1 billion—not to cure an illness, not to alleviate suffering but to protect the patients and professionals at hospitals across America from this horrific gun violence that shook the city of Chicago last week. Imagine if that \$1 billion would have been spent on healing and keeping people healthy.

Chicago Cardinal Blase Cupich was the main celebrant at Officer Jimenez's funeral. I want to read part of what he told the mourners who filled Our Lady of Guadalupe. He said of those in law enforcement:

Every day they get up, leave their homes and family to watch out for us.

I think that maybe the best way that we can console each other and also express our gratitude for the sacrifice that has been given in the death of Officer Jimenez is as citizens, remember that law enforcement wants us all to live together, to watch out for each other, care for each other, and then maybe we will make their jobs easier.

He added:

And maybe, there will not be another death of an officer because all of us are taking responsibility for watching out for one another.

It is not unusual for the people of Chicago to rightfully say to me, their U.S. Senator: What are you going to do about this? What are you going to do to reduce gun violence in the United States?

Does the Second Amendment to the Constitution create this burden on us today, where we have to accept wanton gun violence as part of someone's constitutional right? Of course not. Those who misuse guns, those who do not store them or use them properly and legally should be held accountable. Why then can't we pass basic legislation in this Congress? Why can't we pass a bill to keep guns out of the hands of people who are unqualified to own them or people who are unstable and should never be given a gun? Why can't we make certain that weapons that are military weapons, that have little or no application when it comes to sport or hunting, are not sold to everyone, right and left, in the United States?

I heard recently, there were 11 million AR-15s—a military-style weapon—that are circulating in the United States of America. Does anyone, in their wildest imagination, think that is what the Founding Fathers had in mind when they talked about the right to bear arms; that people would have these deadly military weapons and they would be used so often?

I will be very candid with you, having served in the House and served in the Senate for a number of years, the prospects of passing meaningful gun safety legislation are minimal. There are two things that can make a difference. For one, if the police and law enforcement officers across the United States stood as one and demanded of Congress there be gun safety measures to make their lives safer, it would be happen. Law enforcement could be the inspiration and the political motivation for Congress to act.

Secondly, I know thousands of law-abiding gun owners in the State of Illinois. I grew up in a family—my family and others—where owning a firearm was considered part of life. It was what people did so they could go hunting in a proper way, a legal way. If those legitimate gun owners—sportsmen, hunters, and those who keep them for self-defense—would step up and say we need to draw clear lines for those who abuse firearms and those who are using them to kill innocent people, that, too, could make a difference. Think of that. If the law enforcement community and gun owners who accept responsibility for that firearm came together and demanded Congress pass measures to keep guns out of the hands of those who kill our policemen, threaten our law enforcement officers, and hurt innocent people like the doctor and this pharmacy resident, it would make a significant difference.

Until that happens, we will come and make speeches on the floor of the Senate. We will issue press releases. We will attend funerals. We will offer our thoughts and our prayers, but I think it is time for more. I think it is time for this Nation to step up and do something significant, to not just stop and demand that we bring an end to gun violence in Chicago and other cities but

make this a safer world for our children.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COTTON). Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

G20 SUMMIT

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, this weekend President Trump will head to Argentina for the G20 summit, where he is expected to meet with President Xi of China to discuss our trading relationship.

Now, I have opposed the President on most things. That is hardly a secret. But we agree—we actually agree—on the issue of China. In fact, I agree more with President Trump's views on China than I did with either President Bush or Obama, and I have been supportive of the administration's aggressive course of action on China.

China must be made to understand that we are dead serious about changing its behavior on trade: to allow foreign companies to compete in its markets, to end illegal dumping of cheap goods into our markets, and, most importantly, to end the abusive practice of technology transfers and trade espionage that threatens our intellectual property and know-how. These things don't just threaten our intellectual property, an abstract concept. They threaten good-paying jobs—millions of them—and wealth, billions and trillions of dollars that China has stolen, literally and figuratively, through its unfair practices.

When we have a good product, you can't sell it in China unless you transfer the technology, but they sell tons of things here.

My father-in-law—my late father-in-law—a New York City cabdriver, sometimes said: We are not Uncle Sam; we are Uncle Sap.

Well, in the case of China, that has been the case for too long, and President Trump, to his credit, is beginning to reverse that. Yet despite an initial wave of tariffs, China has not offered meaningful concessions on any of the items I have mentioned.

Ambassador Lighthizer recently put out a report concluding that China is still rapaciously stealing American intellectual property. In fact, the number of Chinese state-sponsored cyber attacks has been rising. So we need to stay the course until China feels the heat.

That is why I was deeply disturbed—very disturbed—to read this morning in the New York Times that President Trump and his advisers—at least some of them—are already considering backing down on further action against

China in order to reach an agreement at the G20.

Let me be clear to the President. Backing off on China for some quick handshake agreement without substantive—real, deep, substantive—commitments, will be seen as a victory by no one. It will be seen as capitulation. It will be seen as weak to cave on tariffs this early before China starts to feel the real pressure and come to a real, deep, and long-lasting agreement that is worth having.

So, Mr. President, don't back down on China. American jobs and American wealth are at stake. You have headed out on a correct course, but you have to follow through. All too often this administration starts out doing something and then backs off. It cannot happen.

I am worried—deeply worried—because I love America and I want us to be No. 1 economically, as well as in every other way. I fear that Trump's eagerness to make a deal—any deal, just like he did with North Korea in Singapore—will be devastating to the long-term interests of the United States. Now that we are finally putting the screws to China, we cannot relent for the sake of a photo-op at the G20.

Yes, our actions will cause some pain, but in the long term, there is much more gain than pain. If we ever needed to do something, it is now. I don't agree with treating Canada or Europe the same as China. That is for sure. But China is a different, different breed of economic cat, and they are robbing us, stealing from us, doing everything they can to become No. 1 economically at our expense, not in a fair competitive way but in a way that is one-sided.

So today, I will be sending a letter to President Trump with some colleagues laying out this position, saying to the President: Please, don't back off on China. American jobs and American wealth depend on it.

YEMEN

Mr. President, later this morning, the Senate will receive a classified all-Senators briefing from Secretaries Pompeo and Mattis on the conflict in Yemen, Saudi Arabia's role in that conflict, and the recent murder of U.S. resident and Washington Post contributor Jamal Khashoggi. This is an important and timely briefing, but there is a gaping hole.

I am concerned and disappointed that President Trump has reportedly forbidden CIA Director Haspel from attending today's briefing. Without her presence at the briefing, there will be no one from our intelligence community.

Director Haspel has heard the Turkish audiotape of the murder, and her Agency has also reportedly made conclusions about the role of various Saudi leaders. Members of this body have a right to hear from Director Haspel. No offense to Secretary Mattis and Secretary Pompeo, but it was the CIA that had jurisdiction to find out what exactly happened, and, according

to press reports, they did. Now Congress is not going to get the briefing.

What is the White House trying to hide?

Well, we all know that President Trump seems to favor the Crown Prince to an extent that he will look the other way at the greatest of transgressions, but it is even a further step down the road of darkness, lack of sunlight to prevent the CIA from giving us their conclusions.

Members of this body have a right to hear from Director Haspel, and her absence today speaks volumes—volumes—about the White House's intention for congressional oversight in Saudi Arabia.

President Trump has gone to extraordinary lengths to avoid criticizing the Crown Prince and the Saudis for the Khashoggi murder, drawing grotesque moral equivalencies and controverting well-known facts to avoid placing blame. It seems so similar to what he has been doing with Putin and Russia, looking the other way for reasons that don't serve America's interests or security.

It has been a shameful abdication of moral leadership from the President. It must give comfort to autocrats everywhere: Go ahead. Behave despicably, and the United States, at minimum, will look the other way and may even pat you on the back.

We have strength for a lot of reasons. We have a strong military. We have a great economy. We have a wonderful people. But one of the reasons we have strength is that we have been the shining city on the hill. We have been the country that has guided doing the right thing in morality and has tried to spread that around the world.

Donald Trump is taking a giant step backwards, and that is not just an abstract concept or something that would be a nice thing to do. It hurts economically, militarily, and security-wise when we don't maintain being that shining city on the hill.

So Leader McCONNELL has rightly called the Saudi murder operation "abhorrent." I hope he agrees with me that Director Haspel should be made available to Congress on this issue. I would ask him to join with me in asking her to come in the same kind of closed, SCIF, intelligence-protecting session.

Relatedly, possibly as early as this afternoon, we expect to have a vote in relation to the Lee-Sanders Yemen War Powers Resolution. Even though they are not here at the moment, I want to applaud the sponsors for their steadfast commitment to this important issue. I will support their resolution once again.

The conflict in Yemen, exacerbated by Saudi Arabia's intervention and its reckless tactics, must be brought to an end. The Yemeni people have endured unending suffering. The United States should once again be the moral leader and lead the diplomatic efforts to resolve the conflict.

NOMINATION OF THOMAS FARR

Mr. President, late this afternoon, the Senate will likely vote on whether to consider the nomination of Thomas Farr for the Eastern District of North Carolina. I have spoken repeatedly—last week, this week—on the floor about what an absolute disgrace it is to have his nomination before us. What a further disgrace it would be if our Republican colleagues march in lockstep approving this awful nomination.

Mr. Farr has been chief cook and bottle washer with North Carolina's invidious and despicable efforts to prevent people, particularly minorities, from voting.

Generations of Americans have agitated, protested, marched, and even died trying to expand the right to vote, regardless of race or gender. Our soldiers, when they are fighting overseas, some of them making the ultimate sacrifice, are defending democracy and the right to vote, among other things. For the Senate in 2018 to elevate a man to the Federal bench who has worked to limit the franchise and gain the electoral system would be a black mark on this body—a black mark on this body.

Adding insult to jury, this is a judicial district that is 27 percent African American. Two African Americans, both women, were nominated in the past. The Republican Senators from North Carolina blocked them with the blue slip, a practice that the leader has abolished with Chairman GRASSLEY, which is a shame in itself. But now to elevate this man to the bench is an insult to African Americans and all Americans—all Americans.

It is amazing to me, utterly amazing—and you see a lot of things around here that you don't believe these days—that the Republican majority is moving forward with this nomination. I hope my colleagues on the Republican side, even at this late hour, take time to study his career. I believe they will find that he is unworthy of the Federal bench, and I hope at least a brave few will join with Democrats this afternoon to reject this awful, awful nomination.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RUSSIA AND UKRAINE

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I have two topics. I want to talk in a moment or two about National Adoption Month, but before I do that, I want to talk just a minute about Russia's continued outrageous behavior in Ukraine and the most recent incident where Russia has manufactured another crisis in order to take advantage of whatever situation they think the moment is ripe for. Clearly this has been allowed to go on for too long.

While Ukraine is not a member of NATO, I think NATO countries—including ours—have a great interest in what is happening in Ukraine with Putin's continued aggressive behavior. We had a joint session—the only joint session where the President of Ukraine has spoken—a few years ago. He made the point that they appreciated the humanitarian help, but I thought the most telling moment in that speech was when he said: We appreciate the humanitarian help, we appreciate the blankets, but you can't fight the Russians with blankets.

That was the time under the Obama administration when we were not giving Ukraine either the defensive or offensive capacity they needed. President Trump has made a different decision, which I support, in helping the Ukrainians defend themselves.

I also support whatever we can do at this moment to let it be known to Putin that we are supportive of Ukraine's efforts to have an independent, democratic government, that we will continue to be supportive of that and we will continue to be helpful in that effort, and President Putin had better be careful that he doesn't take one step too far. In fact, he has already taken steps further than should have been allowed. Those steps—the seizure of Crimea, the invasion of eastern Ukraine by people who were clearly Russian soldiers in plain green uniforms—should not have been allowed. The President has to deal with that, but we need to deal with that in a way that gives Ukraine all the help they need in dealing with that themselves.

Whether the President should make that point by not meeting with Putin or whether he should make that point by meeting with Putin and clearly expressing not only our concern but our absolute rejection of the efforts the Russian Government has made toward Ukraine in an aggressive way, I don't know. I do know that it is time for us to be very clear about how we feel about that and emphasize our continued commitment to the NATO countries along the Russian border, that we absolutely will respond if there is any aggression toward those NATO countries. Frankly, we should be aggressive in our efforts to help Ukraine defend itself.

OBSERVING NATIONAL ADOPTION MONTH

Mr. President, I want to move now to the reason I scheduled this time today and talk a few moments about November as National Adoption Month. As November draws to a close, I also would point out that every month should be adoption month.

I am pleased to work with my colleague and cochair of the Congressional Coalition on Adoption, Senator KLOBUCHAR. We looked forward to passing this resolution supporting National Adoption Month. This is the fourth year we have worked together on this resolution. I thank all of my colleagues for their unanimous support for this resolution as it passed earlier this week.

The Congressional Coalition on Adoption is the largest bipartisan, bicameral coalition in the Congress. We have our friends leading on the House side, and we have this opportunity for many of us to join together on the Senate side. The idea is that every child deserves to grow up in a safe, stable home with a loving family. That is something on which I think everyone can agree. In fact, year after year, we have that agreement in the Senate and the House.

Unfortunately, right now there are more than 400,000 children in the U.S. foster care system and more than 100,000 children waiting in that system to be adopted. They don't have the benefit of a permanent family they can call their own. There are many more children all over the world who need families and who are in settings no one would believe to be ideal.

For those charitable institutions that reach out to have a place for children to go when their mother or their family can no longer keep them, we are grateful. For those families who create a home in the foster system in my State and around the country, we are grateful as well.

There are over 13,000 children in foster care in Missouri. I would like to share a couple stories of people in foster care who would like to have a family become their permanent family, a family they would always know they were secure in and a part of.

Brooklyn is a creative girl in the fourth grade who loves arts and crafts. She is an active girl. She likes to play outdoors. She makes friends easily. She is inquisitive by nature. She loves to ask questions and discover how things work. Brooklyn needs a home.

Levelle is a sixth grader who is an adventure seeker, animal lover, and Lego enthusiast. He has a knack for math and science, and he wants to work at the Children's Hospital when he grows up. Levelle would like a permanent home.

Kiara and Devin are siblings who hope to be placed together. Kiara loves music and singing her favorite songs. When she isn't singing, Kiara loves reading a good book or playing outdoors. She wants to be a surgeon or a lawyer and a full-time foster parent when she grows up. She knows how important her foster family has been for her. She would like to have a family who she knows she would always be able to relate to in a more permanent way. Her brother Devin is also a sixth grader and enjoys learning and playing sports. He especially loves puzzles and figuring out how to put things together. He would like to figure out how to put a family together and be part of that along with his sister. He likes singing, playing, and reading. The two siblings have a lot of fun together and would like to have a forever family.

There are a lot more stories to share. That is why, during National Adoption Month, it is important to think about how year in and year out we are look-

ing for ways to make it easier for families to come together in a permanent way.

Nearly a quarter of the people living in our country have considered adoption. Many of those have misperceptions and concerns about adoption. A lot of people believe that foster care adoption is expensive if they adopt out of the foster care system. In reality, there is almost no cost to adopting from foster care. Financial support is available. In many cases, adoptive parents can get that support to make their adoption of a new family final.

Ensuring that adoption remains a viable option for families is central to our efforts in the adoption caucus. This week, Senator KLOBUCHAR and I will be introducing the Supporting Adoptive Families Act to provide adoptive families additional tools and supportive services to help them achieve a successful adoption and to prevent adopted children from reentering the foster care system.

Since National Adoption Day started in 2000, more than 70,000 children have been adopted into permanent homes. I myself am an adoptive parent, and I look forward to seeing more people have the experience of what happens when you change somebody's life and they change your life.

I hope more families will take this time not only during National Adoption Month but also during the holidays to consider adoption. I can say without exception that one of the most rewarding things you could possibly do is create that environment. My wife and I have benefitted from it and our son has benefitted from it, as have his brothers and sisters and others in our family.

It is an important time to think about ways to reach out and make a permanent difference in people's lives. It is frankly hard to imagine a greater way to make a more permanent difference than considering adoption. Senator KLOBUCHAR and I and others in the adoption caucus would certainly encourage people who are thinking about adoption, as kids need a safe and permanent family.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 15 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

YEMEN

Mr. SANDERS. Thank you.

Mr. President, later this afternoon, I believe, we will be voting on one of the more important foreign policy issues that we have voted on in a very long time. This, of course, deals with the U.S. involvement in the war in Yemen.

In March of 2015, under the leadership of Muhammad bin Salman, who was then the Saudi Defense Minister and is now, of course, the Crown Prince, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab

Emirates intervened in Yemen's ongoing civil war. As a result of that Saudi intervention, Yemen is now experiencing the worst humanitarian disaster in the world.

It is absolutely imperative that we call attention to the inhumane and horrific situation that is now impacting the people of Yemen, a small nation of 28 million people, one of the poorest countries on Earth.

According to the United Nations, Yemen is at risk of the most severe famine in more than 100 years, with some 14 million people—about half of that country's population—facing starvation. Already, as a result of this terrible war, according to the Save the Children organization, some 85,000 children in Yemen have starved to death over the last several years. Let me repeat that. According to the Save the Children organization, some 85,000 children in Yemen have already starved to death over the last several years, and millions more face starvation if the war continues. That is what we are looking at today.

In addition, Yemen is currently experiencing the worst cholera outbreak in the world, with as many as 10,000 new cases erupting every week, according to the World Health Organization. As you know, cholera is a disease spread by infected water that causes severe diarrhea and dehydration and will only accelerate the death rate as it weakens the ability of people to resist disease. The cholera outbreak in Yemen has occurred because Saudi bombs have destroyed Yemen's water infrastructure, and people there are no longer able to access clean water.

The fact is that the United States, with relatively little media attention, has been Saudi Arabia's partner in this horrific war. We have been providing the bombs that the Saudi-led coalition is using. We have been refueling their planes before they drop those bombs. We have been assisting with intelligence. In too many cases, our weapons are being used to kill civilians.

In August, as many will remember, it was an American-made bomb that obliterated a school bus full of young boys, killing dozens and wounding many more. A CNN report found evidence that American weapons have been used in a string of such deadly attacks on civilians since the war began. According to the independent monitoring group, Yemen Data Project, between March of 2015 and March of 2018, more than 30 percent of the Saudi-led coalition's targets have been non-military.

A few weeks ago, I met with several very brave human rights activists from Yemen, urging Congress to put a stop to this war. They told me clearly that when Yemenis see "Made in USA" on the bombs that are killing them, it tells them that it is the United States of America that is actively involved in this war. That is the sad truth. That is a truth we have to finally deal with, and I hope deal with effectively later this afternoon.

The message that the Senate should be sending to the Saudi Government and to the whole world is that we will not continue to support a catastrophic war led by a despotic regime that has a dangerous, destructive, and irresponsible military policy. No more—enough death, enough killing, enough destruction.

Above and beyond the humanitarian crisis—the worst in the world right now, destroying a small, poor country—that war has been a disaster for our national security and the national security of our allies. The administration defends our engagement in Yemen by overstating Iranian support for the Houthi rebels. While Iran's support for Houthi is of serious concern for all of us—and I do not minimize that—the fact is that the relationship has only been strengthened with the intensification of the war. The war is creating the very problem this administration claims to want to solve.

The war in Yemen is also undermining the broader effort against violent extremists. A 2016 State Department report found that the conflict had helped al-Qaida and the Islamic State's Yemen branch "deepen their inroads across much of the country." As the head of the International Rescue Committee, former British Foreign Minister David Miliband said in a recent interview: "The winners are the extremist groups like Al Qaeda and ISIS." Just last week, the Wall Street Journal reported: "Nearly two years after being driven from its stronghold in Yemen, one of al Qaeda's most dangerous franchises has entrenched itself in the country's hinterlands as a devastating war creates the conditions for its comeback."

So this war is, without dispute, a horrific humanitarian crisis, but it is also a strategic disaster, benefiting terrorist groups like al-Qaida and ISIS.

Further, importantly, let us not forget that Saudi Arabia is an undemocratic monarchy controlled by one family. Sometimes we kind of pass that over. It is controlled by one family—the Saudi family. In a 2017 report by the conservative Cato Institute, Saudi Arabia, our ally in this terrible war in Yemen, was ranked 149 out of 159 countries in terms of freedom and human rights. That is our ally. That is the country with which we are putting our credibility on the line. For decades, as I think most Members of the Senate know, the Saudis have funded schools, mosques, and preachers who promote an extreme form of Islam known as Wahhabism.

In Saudi Arabia today, women are not second-class citizens; they are third-class citizens. Women still need the permission of a male guardian to go to school or to get a job. They have to follow a strict dress code and can be stoned to death for adultery or flogged for spending time in the company of a man who is not their relative.

Earlier this year, Saudi activist Loujain al-Hathloul, a leader in the

fight for women's rights, was kidnapped from Abu Dhabi and forced to return to her country. She is currently being held without charges. The same is true of many Saudi political activists.

Sadly, President Trump continues to proclaim his love and affection for the Saudi regime. The brutality and lawlessness of the Saudi regime, as everybody in this country now knows, was made clear to the entire world with the murder of the dissident Saudi journalist, Jamal Khashoggi, in the Saudi consulate in Turkey—right in their own consulate. Pathetically, as part of his continuing respect for authoritarian regimes—whether it is Putin or Russia or other regimes around the world—President Trump rejected the findings of the CIA's assessment that the Saudi Crown Prince was responsible for that murder. When given a choice between believing a despotic ruler in Saudi Arabia or our own Central Intelligence Agency, sadly, the President of the United States sided with the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia.

Lastly, let me raise an issue that many of my conservative friends—MIKE LEE, RAND PAUL, and others—have been raising, which is an important issue that I hope progressives pay attention to, which is that this war in Saudi Arabia was not authorized by the U.S. Congress. It was not voted on by the U.S. Congress and, therefore, is unconstitutional. Let us not forget that the Founding Fathers of this country put the awesome responsibility of war and peace into the hands of the Congress, not the President of the United States—not a Democratic President or a Republican President. Article I of the Constitution clearly states that it is Congress, not the President, that has the power to declare war.

The time is long overdue for Congress to take back that responsibility, which it has abdicated under Democratic and Republican leaderships.

If the Members of the House and the Senate want to go to war in Yemen, vote to go to war in Yemen. Don't let the President of the United States do it on his own.

Later this afternoon, as I understand it, there will be a resolution coming before this body as to whether we proceed to vote on ending U.S. involvement in the Saudi-led war. That amendment is cosponsored by my friends Senator LEE of Utah, Senator MURPHY of Connecticut, and many, many others. This is an enormously important vote. This is a vote that says to the world: We are going to end the horrific humanitarian disaster that is killing tens of thousands of defenseless children in Yemen. It is a vote which says that we are going to stand for American values. It is a vote which says that the time is now to tell Saudi Arabia that we are not continuing to partner with them in this horrific crisis.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECESS

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate stand in recess as under the previous order.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 10:58 a.m., recessed until 12 noon and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mrs. ERNST).

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will come to order.

The Senator from Delaware.

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I rise today to voice my strong support for the nomination of Karen Dunn Kelley to be confirmed as the Deputy Secretary of Commerce.

Ms. Dunn Kelley is well qualified to serve in this critical leadership role at the Department of Commerce, which she has ably filled on an acting basis for the past year.

Ms. Dunn Kelley was already confirmed once this Congress, without opposition. She has served at the Department since August 3, 2017, as the Under Secretary for Economic Affairs, a position to which the Senate confirmed her by voice vote.

Ms. Dunn Kelley has considerable economic and managerial expertise, cultivated through her more than 30 years of experience in the financial investment sector.

In her current capacity as Under Secretary for Economic Affairs, she leads the Economics and Statistics Administration, which provides economic analysis and distributes national economic indicators.

She also serves as the Department's administrator of statistical programs, including the U.S. Census Bureau and the Bureau of Economic Analysis.

Since being named as Acting Deputy Secretary of Commerce, she has been responsible for the management, coordination, and implementation of the Department's Strategic Plan, focusing on job creation and economic growth across the Department's 12 bureaus and agencies.

The Commerce Department's mission, as stated in its 2018–2022 Strategic Plan, is to “create the conditions for economic growth and opportunity.”

The breadth of activities the Department undertakes to accomplish its mission range from promoting commercial space activities to enhancing weather forecasting, and from fishery management and trade promotion to standards setting for emerging technologies, cybersecurity, and privacy, to name just a few.

The Department of Commerce deserves a well-qualified and experienced

leader to continue to foster the unprecedented economic growth we see today and preserve American leadership.

Throughout her career, Ms. Dunn Kelley has exhibited the kind of leadership that will ensure the Department of Commerce will continue its critical missions to promote economic growth, job creation, and innovation.

I urge my colleagues to support Ms. Dunn Kelley's nomination.

I yield the floor.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST— S. 2644

Mr. COONS. Madam President, I am proud to join the Senator from Arizona and the Senator from New Jersey on the floor today in calling for action on a bipartisan bill—a bill that has been crafted to protect our institutions and safeguard the rule of law in this country not just right now but for future Congresses and administrations as well.

Today, we will be asking our colleagues to give the Special Counsel Independence and Integrity Act the consideration here on the floor of the Senate that it deserves. This bill would do something simple but powerful: It would codify Department of Justice regulations that prevent the removal of a special counsel without good cause. That might seem like a small detail, but it is important. Independence is required to ensure that a special counsel can do his or her job and find the facts.

Our bipartisan bill would put this restriction in statute and give the special counsel a clear legal remedy. If removed without cause, the special counsel would have a 10-day period to take the case to a three-judge panel for expedited consideration. If the special counsel doesn't wish to contest his removal, it would proceed without interference.

Both Republicans and Democrats recognize that removal of the current special counsel without a valid basis would be a significant, even a catastrophic event. It would be a constitutional crisis that would threaten the Presidency and the rule of law. We can work together to prevent a crisis.

President Trump should be the first person to support this bill. He has raised concerns about oversight of the special counsel. He has accused the prosecutors of making partisan, politically motivated decisions. This act would ensure that regulations providing for supervision and oversight of the investigation are not just codified but strengthened. It would ensure that Congress gets a complete picture at the end of the investigation.

My colleagues Senators GRAHAM, TILLIS, BOOKER, GRASSLEY, and FEINSTEIN were instrumental in crafting this balanced legislation, and it passed the Judiciary Committee by a strong bipartisan margin of 14 to 7, 7 months ago. The time to take up and pass this bill in the Senate is now.

Some have questioned the need for this legislation. They have said the President would never fire Special Counsel Mueller, and I hope and pray they are right. I don't think it would be in President Trump's interest to remove the special counsel and certainly not in the interest of our country.

The President has repeatedly, publicly, and directly attacked the special counsel and his investigation. Just yesterday, he called his investigation a “phony witch hunt” that is “doing tremendous damage to our criminal justice system.” The President has already fired the FBI Director and forced the resignation of the Attorney General, citing grievances related to this investigation in both cases.

We have an Acting Attorney General not confirmed by the Senate, with no nominee in sight to conduct oversight of this investigation, which is unprecedented and not acceptable.

This bill addresses threats not just to this special counsel but future special counsels. I would ask my colleagues who are holding back this bill to consider whether they may wish it were the law in a Democratic administration as well. We should all appreciate the ways in which this protects the rule of law.

Let me close by quoting what my colleague Chairman GRASSLEY said when he expressed his view back in April that this should be considered by the full Senate during our Judiciary Committee markup on the bill:

In some ways, today's vote will say a lot about how each of us views our responsibilities as Senators. We took an oath to protect and defend the Constitution of the United States, but we're not judges or Presidents. We are stewards of the legislative branch. The Founders anticipated that we would wield the powers the Constitution affords us with great ambition so that we could effectively check the powers of the other branches. This bill certainly does that.

I am confident that, if allowed to go to a vote, this bill would pass with more than 60 votes.

History will judge us for how we work together to confront the challenges that face our Nation. The rest of the world is watching. It is important to take up and pass this bill.

I now recognize my colleague, a cosponsor of this legislation, the Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. BOOKER. Madam President, thank you very much.

I want to thank my colleagues from Arizona and Delaware for being here today and for their leadership. I join them in asking the Senate to pass the Special Counsel Independence and Integrity Act by unanimous consent.

The Special Counsel Independence and Integrity Act is a bipartisan bill. Again, I repeat, this is about the legislative branch asserting a commonsense check and balance on Presidential overreach. It is not divided along party lines; it is a bipartisan bill.