

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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