

accomplishments on behalf of the American people. We passed landmark legislation to help heal the wounds of the opioid epidemic. We delivered measures to help lower prescription drug prices and expand access to safe treatments. We reached a major agreement to rebuild America's military and designed VA reforms that will help our Nation better keep its solemn promises to the brave men and women who have served. We brought a bipartisan scalpel to financial regulations so fewer of Main Street's local lenders will get trapped in the maze of Wall Street's rule book. We reasserted a commitment to regular order appropriations. We laid the groundwork for rebuilding American infrastructure. We delivered certainty and predictability to farming communities across our country.

So we know the Senate, with this Republican majority, is fertile soil for big bipartisan accomplishments. The question is, Will the newly Democratic House join in this good momentum or bring it to a standstill? It is a clear choice, and it will be clear to the American people watching all this at home: Good governance or political performance art? The public interest or political spite? Policymaking or Presidential harassment?

The first test is already upon us. Just yesterday, I was glad to join House and Senate leaders of both parties in a meeting with President Trump at the White House to discuss border security and outstanding appropriations.

This meeting included a briefing on the urgent crisis at our southern border. The facts on the ground are truly striking.

As the Border Patrol Chief testified before the Judiciary Committee a few weeks ago, the Border Patrol apprehended more than 800—800—gang members just last year, a 50-percent increase over the previous year. Methamphetamine seizures are up 75 percent since fiscal year 2015.

Importantly, we also know that in each of our four CBP sectors where physical barriers have been improved or expanded, illegal traffic has dropped by at least—now listen to this—90 percent in these areas where there are physical barriers, illegal traffic has dropped by 90 percent.

These are the facts on which the entire conversation must turn. Yet, as yesterday marked the 12th day of this ongoing partial government shutdown, our Democratic colleagues seemed less concerned with these facts than with their unreasonable political standoff with President Trump.

So for the benefit of all involved, let me restate the terms of engagement; in other words, where we are. We need a bicameral, bipartisan compromise solution. We need an arrangement that can check these three boxes: pass the House, achieve the support of at least 60 Senators, and get a Presidential signature. This is not complicated. That is how you make a law.

The legislation that House Democrats reportedly plan to vote on later

today is, in my view, not a serious attempt to check all three of those boxes. In fact, it ignores the bipartisan conference negotiations and progress made on these spending bills over the last month. So I would call it political theater, not productive lawmaking.

I have made it clear on several occasions—and let me say it again—the Senate will not take up any proposal that does not have a real chance of passing this Chamber and getting a Presidential signature. So let's not waste the time. Let's not get off on the wrong foot with House Democrats using their platform to produce political statements rather than serious solutions. Let's pick up where we left off and dedicate this 116th Congress to the spirit of bipartisan collaboration to create more victories for the American people.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. YOUNG). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant 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. HOEVEN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The minority leader is recognized.

WELCOMING MEMBERS OF THE SENATE

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, first allow me to welcome all of the new Members who were just sworn in for the first time as U.S. Senators, as well as my friends who were reelected to this body. We are entrusted with an awesome responsibility to conduct the vital business of this country we all love. We come at it from many perspectives, backgrounds, and geographies, but the hope is that we can come together and get some good things done.

I hope, in this new year and throughout the new Congress, the Senate will prove worthy of the responsibility and faithfully discharge our duties to our States, our country, the Constitution, and, of course, the well-being of the American people.

Now, sadly, as I address you, this new Congress is under the shadow of a government shutdown. Only one person is to blame for this predicament—President Trump. Democrats made several offers to the President that would have kept the government open over the holiday break. We even agreed to Leader MCCONNELL's proposal to pass a clean continuing resolution to avoid a shutdown, and it passed the Senate unanimously; every single Democrat and every single Republican was for it. All indications were that President Trump would sign it, but then, hounded by the far right, particularly the radio and TV

commentators, President Trump threw a temper tantrum at the eleventh hour, and demanded more than \$5 billion for an ineffective border wall, knowing full well that it lacked the votes in the Senate.

After publicly rooting for a government shutdown for months, President Trump finally got his wish. Now, nine Cabinet Departments and dozens of other Agencies are shut down and hundreds of thousands of Federal workers are doing their jobs without pay. Food safety inspectors are running out of resources. Federal courts are running out of money. National Parks are suffering. In a few short months, the IRS will not be able to issue tax refunds that are vital to so many families.

Yesterday, the President invited congressional leaders to the White House. Speaker-designate PELOSI and I sought to have a sensible discussion about how to reopen the government. We proposed two bills that separate the wall fight from the government shutdown. Let me repeat that. The two bills we proposed separate the wall fight from the government shutdown. You don't have to have one, even if you can't resolve the other.

We proposed two bills: first, a six-bill minibus to provide appropriations for every Cabinet Department except Homeland Security and, second, a 30-day continuing resolution for Homeland Security.

The six bills are not Democratic bills, as I heard some of the rightwing commentators say. The six bills are the same bills that Republicans, including Leader MCCONNELL, supported in the Senate Appropriations Committee. The CR passed unanimously through the Senate last year. Four of the six bills came to the floor and passed the Senate 92 to 6, with the vast majority of Democrats and Republicans being for them.

These are not Democratic bills. They were crafted in a bipartisan way by a Republican-controlled Senate Appropriations Committee and a Republican-controlled Senate. If these bills pass, they would allow us to continue discussion on border security without leaving large portions of the government shut down.

We obviously disagree about the best way to secure the border. We believe the wall is wrong on many counts. The wall is ineffective—most experts agree with that—and the wall is expensive.

When the wall was promised by President Trump, he said it was a campaign pledge he must keep. That was not his campaign pledge. His campaign pledge was to build a wall and have Mexico pay for it, not American taxpayers. So it is not a campaign pledge.

The President has no plan to deal with eminent domain. There are hundreds of landowners on the southern border who will go to court and fight every attempt by the Federal Government to expropriate their land. That will take years.