

CONCLUSION OF MORNING
BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, morning business is closed.

STRENGTHENING AMERICA'S SE-
CURITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST
ACT OF 2019—Motion to Proceed

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to S. 1, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1) to make improvements to certain defense and security assistance provisions and to authorize the appropriation of funds to Israel, to reauthorize the United States-Jordan Defense Cooperation Act of 2015, and to halt the wholesale slaughter of the Syrian people, and for other purposes.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I now suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The VICE PRESIDENT. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CERTIFICATE OF ELECTION

The VICE PRESIDENT. The Chair previously laid before the Senate the certificate of election from the State of Florida. The certificate was in the form suggested by the Senate and was printed in the RECORD.

(The certificate of election was printed in the RECORD of January 3, 2019.)

ADMINISTRATION OF OATH OF
OFFICE

The VICE PRESIDENT. If the Senator-elect will now present himself at the desk, the Chair will administer the oath of office.

The Senator-elect, Rick Scott, escorted by Mr. RUBIO, Mr. LeMieux, Mr. Martinez, and Mr. McGillicuddy III, advanced to the desk of the Vice President; the oath prescribed by law was administered to him by the Vice President; and he thereupon subscribed to the oath in the Official Oath Book.

The VICE PRESIDENT. Congratulations, Senator.

(Applause, Senators rising.)

STRENGTHENING AMERICA'S SE-
CURITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST
ACT OF 2019—Motion to Proceed
(Continued)

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HOEVEN). The majority leader.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

S. 1

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, a few moments ago we welcomed our new colleague, my colleague for the State of Florida, former Governor and now U.S. Senator RICK SCOTT, who will do a phenomenal job here on behalf of the State of Florida. I welcome him to the U.S. Senate, the world's greatest deliberative body—and, on occasion, perhaps the strangest as well.

In about 1 hour 15 minutes, the Senate is going to take up S. 1, which is a combination of four separate bills that enjoy widespread support in this Chamber from colleagues on both sides of the aisle, all of them sponsored and cosponsored by both sides of the aisle, and apparently we will fail to get a significant number of votes to get on this bill, nonetheless.

So it is perhaps one the few places on Earth where people vote against things they are for because of reasons unrelated to the issue at hand. I don't want to dig too deep into that. That will be a topic for conversation later on, and maybe I will be wrong. Maybe they will change their minds in the next 1 hour 15 minutes, and we will have the votes we need, but I don't think it makes a lot of sense to say: I am upset about the government shutdown—by the way, the Senate voted unanimously to fund the government by a voice vote. We didn't even have a rollcall vote. So this Chamber has already enacted in that regard. At this point, it is incumbent on the leaders of the Democratic Party in the Senate, combined with the White House, to come up with a deal to reopen the government. This government shutdown is not good for anybody. I have never seen anybody win one of these.

That said, I don't know why we would shut down the Senate, too, given the issues we face.

About 3 weeks ago, the President announced that the United States was withdrawing from our engagement in Syria. I—and I think the majority of the people in the Senate—believed that decision was a mistake and is a mistake.

While I was certainly encouraged by some of the comments by the head of the National Security Council, Ambassador John Bolton, on the pace and scale and scope of the withdrawal, nonetheless, there have been conflicting statements since then which put this all in question.

At the time he made this decision, we walked through all of the reasons why this was a mistake—not because we want to be in war in Syria forever. That is false. Of course, it has to come to an end, but it needs to come to an end in a way that is in the interest of the United States of America. It is not in the interest of the United States of

America to see ISIS reemerge the way they did after 2011, when the United States left Iraq.

When the United States left and pulled back its presence in Iraq, it allowed ISIS to reconstitute itself and reemerge. They were called something different then, but they were basically a spinoff of al-Qaida. They started out as an insurgency and grew very rapidly. They are larger today and they are more powerful today than when they reconstituted themselves almost a decade ago. I have no doubt that if this moves forward, ISIS will reconstitute itself, maybe not as a caliphate but as something equally dangerous, and that is an insurgency with the capability not just to create havoc, mayhem, murder, and destruction in Syria and potentially once again in Iraq but also to externally plot and attack us here on Homeland.

This raises all other types of possibilities, like the Iraqi troops along with irregular forces sponsored by Iran—the Shia militia that have been on the ground in Iraq—coming across the border and into Syria. We all have read and heard about the Turkish troops that want to come into the Kurdish areas.

If Assad is sitting there now with the United States pulling out and all of this is going on, he figures that at this point what does he need a political solution for, what does he need the U.N. or anybody for? The saddest part is that this diminishes the chances that Assad will ever have to face accountability for the crimes committed by his regime against innocent civilians—children, women, and others—not just for the gassing and use of chemical weapons but for widespread torture and murder. We will discuss that more as the week goes on.

We are also concerned about Iran's growing influence with the United States leaving, especially in southeast Iraq and on the border of Jordan and Israel, with Hezbollah and other Iranian proxies and Iran itself, or the IRGC and General Soleimani, who is a maven of murder in that area, basically doing whatever they want. They have more freedom of movement, and there is the direct threat that it poses to both Israel and to Jordan.

By the way, when the Turks come in or potentially Iraqi troops come in—when ISIS is reconstituted and starts killing people again—you are going to have new refugee flows. Maybe it will be mostly Kurds this time, maybe folks from the Syrian defense forces who had fought alongside us for a while and their families. Where will all of these new refugees go? Potentially, some will wind up in Jordan, further destabilizing or testing that country's ability to deal with all of this.

On that last point, both the Kurds and the Syrian defense forces have in excess of 700 ISIS fighters in custody, in prison. Are they going to let them all go? Because without us there supporting them, I don't know how they