

taxpayers—no matter which party is in power. That is why I have always dedicated a significant amount of resources to oversight, even when I was a new Senator. That is why, when some have suggested that Agencies should only respond to the oversight requests of committee chairmen and ranking members, I have fought back—even when 2 years ago, the new administration under Trump tried to say that only chairmen and ranking members should get this information—because I believe that every Senator has a duty to the taxpayers who sent us here to take an active part in congressional oversight efforts.

The Supreme Court observed in *Watkins v. United States* that “the power of Congress to conduct investigations is inherent in the legislative process.” Oversight helps us to write better bills and to be wiser with taxpayer dollars. It is also how we make the Agencies accountable to the American people.

Over time, as our government has grown in size, Congress has delegated more and more power to the executive branch—probably more power than we should have. Some of the delegation is necessary for the government to function efficiently, but there is an inherent danger whenever Congress delegates power to the executive branch, especially if we delegate legislative authority.

When they drafted the Constitution, the Founders of our Nation were rightfully concerned that those in power would be tempted to abuse power in favor of their own interests. As we all studied in high school government, to prevent this, the Founders divided power among three branches of government and set up a system of government in which, to paraphrase James Madison in *Federalist No. 51*: Ambition [is] made to counteract ambition. It is through this system of checks and balances between ambitious branches of government that our fundamental liberties are protected. The concentration of too much power in the executive branch upsets the careful balance of the separated powers that was envisioned by our Founders.

As legislators, it is our duty then, as the Founders rightfully intended, for us to protect and defend the interests of our branch of government. So, when we write laws, we must be careful not to cede too much authority to the executive branch, and we must make sure that if we have delegated authority, we conduct rigorous oversight to make sure it is being used appropriately. It is only through rigorous oversight that we make sure that the government of the people and by the people then works for the people.

As President pro tempore, I will assure my colleagues and my constituents that I will bring the same Iowa work ethic, decency, and integrity to this job that I have cultivated throughout my years of public service. Like my President pro tempore predecessors, I will work to uphold the dig-

nity and decorum of this body and to defend the Senate’s institutional interests. It is what our Founders expected and the American people deserve.

Each Member of the Senate is privileged to serve. I especially welcome nine of the newest Members to the Senate. There are seven Republicans and two Democrats who are new: Senator BLACKBURN of Tennessee, Senator BRAUN of Indiana, Senator CRAMER of North Dakota, Senator HAWLEY of Missouri, Senator MCSALLY of Arizona, Senator ROMNEY of Utah, Senator ROSEN of Nevada, Senator SINEMA of Arizona, and Senator SCOTT of Florida.

To my newest colleagues whom I have just named and, of course, to all of my colleagues who have been around here for quite a while, I want you to know my door is open. As I tell a lot of new colleagues—and I can repeat it for older colleagues—if you want to know anything about what CHUCK GRASSLEY is thinking or doing, just ask me. I will bet, 99 percent of the time, I will be able to tell you exactly what it is. If I can’t, I will be glad to tell you why I can’t tell you. I look forward to working with each of you in the weeks, months, and years ahead.

With great honor and, of course, humility, I look forward to my service as President pro tempore. Like my good friend and our most recent President pro tempore, ORRIN HATCH, I look forward to opening the people’s business each day in the Senate. I will then work the rest of that day to deliver on my commitment to find solutions to our country’s most pressing problems, to seek common ground with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, and to exercise rigorous oversight over the other branches of government. Our Nation’s most pressing problem today is that of getting the government opened up.

I thank my colleagues.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. PERDUE. 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. PERDUE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate recess subject to the call of the Chair.

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

Thereupon, the Senate, at 1:30 p.m., recessed until 2:44 p.m., and was reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mrs. CAPITO).

STRENGTHENING AMERICA’S SECURITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST ACT OF 2019—MOTION TO PROCEED—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will come to order.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, for weeks, I have continuously said I wouldn’t let the Senate become a theater for show votes and messaging stunts from either side. We would only vote on plans that stood an actual chance of being signed by the President and, thus, obviously becoming law.

So I was glad to hear today the President’s announcement that he and our Democratic colleagues have reached an agreement that will immediately reopen the government while providing the room to negotiate a funding bill for the Department of Homeland Security. Further, negotiations on DHS will be prioritized over the consideration of any other funding bill. With cooperation, we can pass legislation opening the government, and we can send the DHS appropriations bill to a conference today with the House.

I am glad the closed portions of the Federal Government will reopen and get back online. I am glad the dedicated men and women of the Coast Guard, law enforcement, the TSA, and all of the other Federal employees will not have to go longer without pay for their work and will receive their backpay. I know the pain this episode has caused for many Kentuckians and for people all over our country. They deserve this resolution.

In going forward, I hope our Democratic friends will stay true to the commitment they have stated constantly over the past weeks that once the government was reopened, they would be perfectly willing to negotiate in good faith on full-year government funding that would include a significant investment in urgently needed border security measures, including physical barriers.

After all, the only way Federal workers are going to have stability and certainty beyond the next 3 weeks and the only way our border is going to have real security is if the Democrats will stop playing partisan games and get serious about negotiating with the President on a long-term compromise.

The days ahead will tell us whether our Democratic colleagues are actually serious about securing our Nation—whether they actually mean what they say. The President has called on the Senate to act on these proposals, and now that there has been an agreement between the Democrats and the White House, we can make that happen.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, the longest shutdown in American history will finally end today. The President has agreed to our request to open the government and then debate border security, which is great news for 800,000 Federal workers and millions of Americans who depend upon government services. I thank President Trump and Leader MCCONNELL.