

engaged in the daily fight against the terrorists.

My amendment would further condemn Iran for its hampering of diplomatic efforts and its destabilizing work throughout the region. It would call for greater consultation with the United States' allies and partners in the region, especially Israel, with regard to future stability we seek in a critical region, and it would reiterate the importance of the administration's consulting and coordinating with Congress on its long-term strategies for success in these struggles, including a thorough accounting of the risk of withdrawing too hastily.

I am glad that, after needless political delays, our Democratic colleagues finally allowed a first procedural vote on this legislation.

I am proud to support its provisions that concern Israel, Jordan, and Syria, and I will be proud to offer this amendment so the Senate can speak equally clearly on the fight against al-Qaida, ISIS, and other bad actors that needs to continue in both Syria and Afghanistan.

H.R. 1

Mr. President, on a totally different matter, this week Democrats in the House are beginning the committee process for a bill they are saying is their party's signature priority for this Congress—their signature priority. They are so focused on this legislation that they have given it the ceremonial designation of H.R. 1—their top priority.

I think it more accurately could be described another way: the "Democratic Politician Protection Act." This sprawling proposal—sprawling, comprehensive proposal—is basically the far left's entire Christmas wish list where our Nation's political process is concerned.

What would it do? It would pile new Washington-focused regulations onto virtually every aspect of how politicians are elected and what Americans can say about them.

My Democratic friends have already tried to market this unprecedented intrusion with all the predictable clichés: "restoring democracy," "for the people."

Really? The only common motivation running through the whole proposal seems to be this: Democrats searching for ways to give Washington politicians more control over what Americans say about them and how they get elected. It is an attempt to rewrite the rules of American politics in order to benefit one side over the other.

I expect I will be talking about the "Democratic Politician Protection Act" here on the floor for a long time, but I wanted to just take a few minutes today to give my colleagues a quick tour—just a quick tour through a few of its components.

To begin with, Democrats want to make the Federal Elections Commission a partisan institution. Since Wa-

tergate, the FEC has been a six-member body. Neither party gets more than three seats—neither party. After all, the reason for that is this is a Commission with the sensitive duty of regulating Americans' speech—Americans' speech about politics and campaigns themselves.

The FEC should not be a weapon that one political party can wield against its rivals, but the legislation the Democrats are moving through committee would throw away—throw away—the bipartisan split. It would reduce the FEC to a five-member body and—listen to this—let sitting Presidents pick the majority—let sitting Presidents pick the majority. Obviously, this is a recipe for turning the FEC into a partisan weapon.

Democrats also empower the newly partisan FEC to regulate more of what Americans can say. That 3-to-2 FEC would get to determine what they subjectively see as "campaign related," a new vague category of regulated speech.

There would also be new latitude to decide when a nonprofit's speech has crossed that same fuzzy line and subsequently force the publication of the group's private supporters.

All of this appears to be custom built to chill the exercise of the First Amendment and give Federal bureaucrats and the waiting leftwing mob a clearer idea of just whom to intimidate.

And this just scratches the surface of this proposal. The House Democrats are also eyeing an expensive new set of taxpayer subsidies for political campaign consultants. They want a new six-fold government match for certain types of political contributions—a new federally funded voucher program to line politicians' pockets with even more taxpayer dollars, plus—listen to this. That wasn't enough—taking our tax money to spend on attack ads and bumper strips and the like. Listen to this: 6 additional days of paid vacation for any Federal bureaucrat who decides they would like to hover around a polling place while Americans cast ballots.

So the new taxpayer subsidies don't even pass the laugh test, but other aspects of the bill are even more disturbing. Perhaps most worrisome of all is the unprecedented proposal to federalize our elections, giving Washington politicians even more control over who gets to come here in the first place.

Hundreds—literally hundreds—of pages are dedicated to telling States how to run their elections, from when and where they must take place to the procedures they have to follow, to the machines they have to use.

Democrats want to import the inefficiencies of State and Federal bureaucracy to ballot boxes and voter rolls, while making it harder for States and localities to clean inaccurate data off the voter rolls, harder to remove duplicate registrations, ineligible voters, and errors, and harder to check every

box Washington Democrats demand before allowing you to pick your representatives.

Provision after provision would make it easier for campaign lawyers to take advantage of disorganization, chaos, and confusion. Yet the proposal does practically nothing to combat the real live voter fraud that does happen right before our eyes.

It is suspiciously silent on the murky "ballot harvesting" practices that recently threw North Carolina's Ninth Congressional District into total chaos. There are pages and pages rewriting election law but nothing on this actual problem, perhaps because similar practices are perfectly legal in California—perfectly legal—where the Democratic Party made big gains in the House just last November.

So like I said, this has just been an introductory tour I am giving this morning—just an introductory tour. This sprawling power grab clocks in at 570 pages—570 pages. Seemingly every one of these pages is filled with some effort to rewrite the rules to favor the Democrats and their friends.

I have to say this: Our colleagues across the Capitol know what they are after. So I am going to continue to shed light on these far-left proposals many mornings. I want to make sure the American people understand what this is all about. I want to assure the American people, right from the outset, that my colleagues and I will fight to prevent this one-sided power grab. It may pass the House, but not the Senate.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CRUZ). The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. 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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:31 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and 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.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding rule XXII, at 3 o'clock p.m. today, all postcloture time on the motion to proceed to S. 1 expire and the