

nearly identical procedural step in 2013 when it stood to benefit President Obama. Now, with a different occupant in the White House, apparently the same principle just doesn't apply.

They said their unprecedented delays and obstruction were justified because this administration's nominees were so controversial. They said there were legitimate reasons why they had forced cloture votes on 40-plus different positions for the first time in history and wasted so much floor time.

My Democratic colleagues insisted these were highly controversial people. Well, Republicans knew better, so we took the sensible step to expedite the proceedings for these lower level nominations. It is time to take a look at some of the individuals who have been moving through under these new procedures and how controversial they are.

This week alone, we have now confirmed the Energy Department's general counsel by a vote of 68 to 31; the Director of the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, 72 to 27; and an Assistant Secretary of State, 90 to 8. Yesterday afternoon, we advanced the nominations of three district court judges with 64 votes, 89 votes, and 94 votes. Obviously, they are really controversial people we have been talking about here.

We aren't talking about lightning-rod partisans here. These are abundantly qualified, noncontroversial public servants. They are the kinds who used to go in big groups by voice vote. The two leaders would put together packages and voice vote them. Well, our friends across the aisle aren't letting that happen.

Now we are beginning to make better progress, nonetheless. Now that we are finally able to get these people voted on, our Democratic colleagues mostly don't oppose them. It would be almost comical if it weren't a sad reminder of just how totally pointless the past 2 years of obstruction have been.

But it is also a hopeful sign as we move forward. After studying and considering these nominees, the Senate will keep on filling traditional vacancies. We will keep confirming the President's team. We will keep giving the American people the government they actually voted for back in 2016.

MEDICARE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, as I have mentioned, there has been a remarkable development this week in the House. The Rules Committee held the first hearing to discuss Medicare for None. It was another demonstration of how disconnected our Democratic colleagues' agenda has become from the best interests of working Americans and middle-class families.

The last 2 years have been a case study on how much American families benefit when Republican policies get out of the way. Helped along by tax reform, regulatory reform, and other efforts, the country is seeing starkly low

unemployment, faster wage growth—more opportunities for more families to get ahead and build their lives.

Rather than admit the obvious, our Democratic colleagues are choosing to double and triple down on jacking taxes back up and making families cede a larger role for Washington in their daily lives.

We have heard the pitch on healthcare. They want to trade seniors' Medicare and all private, employer-sponsored health insurance plans for a one-size-fits-all Federal plan and the higher taxes needed to pay for it.

Just yesterday, a new report from the CBO confirmed that such a scheme would substantially increase Federal spending and could lead to longer wait times, worse quality of care, and a system less responsive to patient needs.

On top of that, we know what our Democratic colleagues tried to sell families when it comes to the Green New Deal: a Washington, DC, war on our domestic energy that would cost Americans their jobs, increase families' bills, forcibly change the homes Americans are allowed to live in, industries they are allowed to work in, and, of course, the cars they are allowed to drive.

Let's remember that all of this self-inflicted economic pain would not really buy any meaningful gains in terms of carbon emissions. For the better part of the last decade, as U.S. emissions actually declined—emissions have been going down—our largest competitors, like China, continued to emit more and more.

Hog-tying the U.S. economy in the name of further emissions reductions would do nothing but give the largest emitters license to keep on emitting while poaching American jobs in the process.

I don't think real progress is actually the point here. Facts are not the motivating factor. My colleagues on the left think these self-inflicted national injuries just feel like this greening of America is the right thing to do. They just feel it.

Case in point, I understand that House Democrats are planning to pass a measure today that would try to force the Trump administration to remain in the 2015 Paris Agreement on greenhouse emissions. This is the big international deal that the Obama administration cheered on. It doesn't even pass the laugh test.

One expert analysis noted this week that even a generous estimate puts the impact of America's participation on global temperature reduction well within the margin of error: One-hundredth of 1 degree Celsius. In other words, he points out, it is a completely unmeasurable effect—tons of redtape and real economic damage for zero measurable effect. That is my friends across the aisle in a nutshell on this issue. Tie America's own hands for no benefit, while China and our other international competitors go roaring right by, all so a few pockets of high

society can pat themselves on the back at the next cocktail party.

House Democrats may see this as exciting political theater, but the middle-class Americans I represent give it two thumbs down. So this futile gesture to handcuff the U.S. economy through the ill-fated Paris deal will go nowhere here in the Senate. We are in the business of actually helping middle-class families, not inventing new obstacles to throw in their paths.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Rodolfo Armando Ruiz II, of Florida, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of Florida.

Mr. McCONNELL. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The 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 ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Democratic leader is recognized.

BARR HEARING

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, Attorney General Barr's performance in yesterday's Judiciary Committee hearing was abysmal. It raised all types of questions about his willingness to be a faithful steward of the law. Of the several outlandish claims, one stood out. One of them should send shivers down the spine of anyone who believes in this democracy. It would probably send shivers down the spines of the Founding Fathers if they were to hear this Attorney General say what he said. Attorney General Barr said yesterday that the President could not have obstructed justice because he believed he was falsely accused. He even went further. He made a broad principle.

Here is what he said: