

Mr. McCONNELL. In order to place the bills on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I object to further proceedings en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection having been heard, the bills will be placed on the calendar.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

MUELLER REPORT

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I have just listened to my friend the majority leader engage in an astounding bit of whitewash—not unexpected but entirely unconvincing.

Yes, the Mueller investigation took 2 years, and, yes, it produced a stunning document in the end—not only a damning appraisal of our election security and just how willing a major Presidential campaign was to accept and amplify the disinformation of a foreign adversary but also a thorough examination of the behavior of a lawless President, who at least on 11 occasions, according to the report, may have obstructed a Federal investigation.

So while my friend the majority leader wants to say “case closed”—I don’t blame them—375 former Federal prosecutors looked at the Mueller report and said publicly that the conduct of the President amounts to felony obstruction of justice. In any other case, were he not President, those prosecutors would have recommended bringing charges.

Our leader saying “Let’s move on” is sort of like Richard Nixon saying “Let’s move on” at the height of the investigation of his wrongdoing. Of course he wants to move on. He wants to cover it up. He wants silence on one of the most serious issues we face—whether a foreign power can manipulate our elections, the wellspring of our democracy.

If the leader is sincere, then put election security on the floor. Let’s debate it. Put sanctions on Russia on the floor. Let’s debate it. He doesn’t want to move on; he wants to run away from these awful facts that relate to the wellspring of our democracy—foreign interference in our election and a President who is lawless. That is what he wants to push under the rug.

Of course, he would say this is all done. It is not done. If Russia interferes in 2020, it is not done. If this President or future Presidents believe

that they can avoid the law and even break the law—at least according to 375 prosecutors—it is not done. This is very serious stuff.

The leader bemoans “breathless conspiracy theorizing.” For a moment, I thought he was referring to the President and to those House and Senate Republicans who for 2 years intentionally sought to undercut Mueller’s investigation by peddling farfetched conspiracy theories about deep state “coups,” unmasking scandals, and uranium purchases to muddy the waters. I guess he meant something about Democrats. But I don’t remember the Republican leader bemoaning those breathless conspiracies; nor do I remember the Republican leader or the Republican Senators having such a distaste for congressional oversight during the Obama administration. On things far less serious, they were relentless in wanting investigations. Now they say “never mind” when the wellspring of our democracy is at stake, there is foreign interference in our elections, and a President who just disobeys the law. The leader sure acted differently a few years back.

What I remember is that from the very beginning, the Republican leader has not taken the threat of Russia’s election interference as seriously as he should. In the run-up to the 2016 election, when the Obama administration sought to warn State election officials about foreign meddling and designate election systems as “critical infrastructure,” Leader McCONNELL reportedly delayed for weeks, “watered down” the letter from congressional leaders, and pushed back against the designation. Yes, I would have swept this under the rug if I had done that. I wouldn’t want to keep talking about it.

Despite 2 years in charge of the Senate since the 2016 election, Leader McCONNELL has pursued additional election security only after being prodded by Democrats, and it has been half-baked at that.

Leader McCONNELL thwarted the Rules Committee from marking up the bipartisan legislation designed to enhance election security.

At the beginning of the year, 42 Republicans, including Leader McCONNELL, essentially voted in favor of the administration’s proposal to weaken sanctions against Russia.

In the last round of negotiations, Senate Republicans blocked our attempt to fund additional efforts to make our election safe in 2020.

Now, despite a preponderance of testimony from our intelligence officials—not politicians; intelligence officials who are in charge of our security and well-being—they testified that foreign powers are ramping up to interfere in our next election. The Senate has done nothing to grapple with the problem, even as minimal of a request as I made to the leader: an all-Senators’ classified briefing from our defense and intelligence leaders so that the Senate understands what we need to do to pro-

tect American in 2020 and beyond. I have been asking for 2 weeks, and we still haven’t gotten action.

Let’s bring the bipartisan Secure Elections Act to the floor and debate and amend. Let’s strengthen sanctions against Putin and any other adversary who would dare to interfere with the sanctity of our elections.

Regardless of what you believe about the President’s conduct, we should all—every single Democrat and every single Republican—be working to ensure that what happened in 2016 never happens again. We can debate how much of an effect it had, but we sure don’t want it to be worse—whatever it was—in 2020 than it was in 2016. And the leader sits on his hands, does nothing, creates a legislative graveyard for these and every other issue, and then says: Let’s move on. No way. No way. We can do both. We can make our elections more secure. We can examine what happened so we can make them more secure and do other issues. So far, Leader McCONNELL is doing neither.

What we have here is very simple. What we have here is a concerted effort to circle the wagons to protect the President from accountability, to whitewash his reprehensible conduct by simply declaring it irrelevant. In that effort, the leader and Senate Republicans are falling down drastically on their constitutional duty to provide oversight and, I fear, to defend the national interest as well.

SENATE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, let me now talk about something related—the legislative graveyard.

Leader McCONNELL says: Let’s move on and work together. There hasn’t been a single bill put on the floor on issues we can debate, whether it is protecting preexisting conditions, making our education system better, dealing with the problem of the high cost of drugs, doing infrastructure—nothing. Just appointments have been put on the floor. And nothing has been done on election security at the very minimum.

I know the leader is afraid to debate what happened and explore what happened given the tawdry history of certainly President Trump and of Senate Republicans in responding to this serious issue, but at least he could move forward and we could put some bills on the floor and debate them to strengthen our election security, which everyone admits is weak.

So if Leader McCONNELL, as he says, is ready to move on to serious things, then how about bringing forward legislation to protect our elections? For 4 months, the Senate has been little more than a legislative graveyard, and election security is exhibit A.

The House passed important reforms to improve and safeguard our elections. No action here in the Senate. We have a bipartisan election security bill waiting in committee. No movement from the leader.