

legislative graveyard where even the most bipartisan, broadly supported legislation like background checks can't even get a vote or a discussion. Here we are at the end of another week in the Senate. This week, we have done nothing but process nominations. It is not because there is nothing else to do. There are over 100 bills—many non-controversial and many bipartisan—that have passed the House and are awaiting Senate action, but Leader MCCONNELL has turned the Senate into a legislative graveyard.

When the American people demand action, Leader MCCONNELL does nothing. When the American people demand action, the Senate Republicans are in obeisance to this strategy of a graveyard, even when in their hearts they may know doing that is not right and they would like to debate the issues, whatever their views.

Leader MCCONNELL promised to preside over an open Senate, with vigorous debate and amendment votes and the ability to vote on issues of the day. He promised that, and he said no matter which party offered the ideas. Leader MCCONNELL is breaking those promises when he consigns bill after bill—every one of them needed by America, needed by the middle class, needed by working people—every one of them to a legislative graveyard. So there are no debates, no amendments, no progress, no hope for the American people as the Senate continues to be in such a legislative graveyard.

PUERTO RICO

Madam President, on Puerto Rico, last night President Trump held his first Florida rally of the year in Panama City, in the heart of the Florida Panhandle, which was so awfully devastated by Hurricane Michael last year. President Trump's speech contained all the usual demagoguery and bloviating, but one thing in particular stuck in his craw. The President used his rally in Florida to denigrate once again the island of Puerto Rico, to repeat falsehoods about how much aid it has received, and to pit one American against another, which seems to be his MO.

Again, the President said that Puerto Rico has gotten \$91 billion of disaster aid—flat-out false. They received a hair over \$11 billion.

Mr. President, ask your budget people how many dollars Puerto Rico has received, and they will not tell you the \$91 billion falsehood you have repeated over and over.

Again, I saw the President pit Americans against each other, going so far as to hold up a flimsy graphic to get Floridians in his audience to turn against Americans in Puerto Rico. At a time when we need unity, at a time when we should be together, with all the threats challenging us—domestic and foreign and all the other types of challenges—all the President can do is to appeal to people's worst instincts and divide us. We are humans. We are made by God. We have good and bad in each of us.

The President should be appealing to the good side, not the bad side, but all he does is the bad side. It is a shame.

Of course, he said that Puerto Ricans should be grateful for whatever disaster aid they have received, as a pretext for not doing more. Does he say that to the people of Florida: You shouldn't get any more aid because you received some already and you should be grateful. Of course not, it is a double standard. President Trump ought to be ashamed of himself for condescending to and publicly mocking a community that is still suffering. These are men, women, and children. They still don't have their homes, their hospitals, their schools. They can't go on with life, and he is mocking them? What did they do wrong? They are American citizens. I sometimes cannot believe the depth of cruelty that the President uses to treat fellow American citizens this way.

The fact remains, we can end the impasse over disaster aid at a moment's notice. To the people of Florida: All you have to do is tell your Senators to vote for the full aid package, including aid to Puerto Rico, and you will get all the aid you need, all the aid that Congress has allocated. Just do that.

But Republican Senators, after Donald Trump went in and said no more aid to Puerto Rico, blindly bowed in obeisance. The House will never pass a bill that doesn't treat Puerto Rico as fairly as it treats the other States of the Union.

Let's decide now that we are going to help every corner of America that is hit by disaster, because that is what Americans have always done.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Madam President, on the climate and dark money, I want to return to the topic of climate change, specifically today. Why in our political system has progress on climate change been so slow? Why is it that so many Republicans here in the Senate are afraid to say yes to three questions: Is climate change real? Is it caused by humans? Should we do something about it? They are afraid to say yes on any of those. Why? It is so obvious to almost everybody else.

Well, one of the dominant reasons is that for decades Big Oil, Big Gas, and Big Coal have devoted huge financial resources to stymie political progress and sow doubt about climate science. For years, one of the biggest perpetrators of this anti-climate campaign has been the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

The national chamber of commerce, which bears almost no resemblance to local chambers across the country, has acted like a fossil fuel front group. It accepts millions of dollars in dark money, will not reveal its secret donors, and has consistently fought any attempts by our government to grapple with climate change—carbon pricing, reducing methane emissions, and even the Paris climate accords.

The game has become so obvious that major American corporations have disassociated themselves with the chamber over its climate policies.

Recently, the chamber has begun to talk as if it intends to get better on climate change. They added a new page to their website and announced an "energy innovation" agenda. I welcome the progress. But truthfully, the chamber has made a shocking about-face from climate denier to supposed climate believer and advocate. It is hard not to be skeptical. Now, if the chamber were serious about combating climate change, it would disclose its donors and let the world see that it is finally changing. Maybe it would even start endorsing different candidates or getting behind truly bold legislation. Maybe they can come here and lobby that we should support the Paris accords. Until that day, the chamber's so-called big change on climate seems to be cosmetic.

It may seem that I am spending an awful lot of time on one group, but it matters. The chamber is part of a vast network of generally rightwing organizations that accept and disseminate billions of dollars of special interest money with zero disclosure. It has warped our political process by creating a financial incentive for many of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle to oppose climate policies that deal with climate change, to oppose appropriate consumer protections, to oppose environmental protections, and to oppose issues such as gun safety, as well.

Senator SHELDON WHITEHOUSE of Rhode Island has done an amazing—an outstanding job—of bringing this issue to the forefront and exposing the web of dark money that lurks evilly behind our politics. I want to thank and commend him for it.

I am glad that organizations like the chamber are feeling the heat for opposing climate change and proposed solutions. They should. But the bigger and more pervasive issue is that dark money will continue to flow into our political system until we change it. Until we deal with it or until groups start voluntary disclosures, in all likelihood these organizations will continue to frustrate the progress behind the scenes and the longing we all have to keep our planet the beautiful place that it is and to prevent the seas from rising and the weather from changing and the coral reefs from disappearing. That will not become a reality as long as this dark money is still having a stranglehold on so many of the other party.

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.

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to speak as in morning