

readiness to build the President's medieval wall.

We all remember Donald Trump's idea that we need a 2,000-mile concrete wall from sea to shining sea and his claim that Mexico would pay for it. He said it some 200 times on the campaign trail and in the Oval Office.

When Mexico said no, the President told the military they would have to pay for it. On February 15, President Trump announced that he would go around Congress and build the wall with \$6.1 billion that Congress gave to our military. After the announcement, the President was asked if he had consulted his military advisers first. He said that they told him some of the tradeoffs, but, "It didn't sound too important to me."

In March, Acting Secretary Shanahan took the first step: taking \$1 billion appropriated by Congress for military pay and pensions to use for the wall. DOD told us that they had more money than they needed because the Army missed their recruiting goals.

At a hearing that same week, Secretary of the Army Mark Esper admitted that the Army hadn't budgeted for paying the salaries of the troops on the border, and they were short \$350 million. Why didn't Acting Secretary of Defense Shanahan take this \$1 billion of extra funds and give some to the Army? His notification to Congress laid it out in disappointing detail. He labeled the wall a "higher priority."

It is incredible that these are the priorities of the President and Acting Secretary Shanahan: wall first, military last.

Then on May 10, Acting Secretary Shanahan did it again, but he took \$1.5 billion from the military this time. The Washington Post headline the next day said it all: "Pentagon will pull money from ballistic missile and surveillance plane programs to fund border wall."

Once again, the Pentagon claimed that the funds were extra, that the Pentagon couldn't spend this missile defense money and surveillance money this year for various reasons. Once again, the "higher priority" was the wall.

But the Army isn't the only one in need. Each military service is blinking red. Last month, in a leaked memo, the head of the Marine Corps, General Neller, said that the President's decision was contributing to "unacceptable risk to Marine Corps combat readiness and solvency."

General Neller noted that the marines had already pulled out of three military exercises and were cutting back on combat equipment maintenance because there wasn't enough money to go around. He noted that Hurricanes Florence and Michael last year had done \$3.6 billion in damage to Camp Lejeune and other Marine Corps property. He said that marines were living in "compromised housing," with another hurricane season starting up

this June. He also warned that he might also have to cancel more than a dozen additional exercises if the marines didn't get budget help. Once again, we are seeing the wall is first, and the military is last.

In an unusual move late last month, Secretary of the Air Force Heather Wilson published an op-ed highlighting the impact of several natural disasters on Air Force bases. In October 2018, Hurricane Michael inflicted \$4.7 billion of damage on Tyndall Air Force Base in Florida. In March 2019, a historic flood inundated Offutt Air Force base in Nebraska, submerging dozens of buildings. The Senate continues to work on an emergency supplemental to make a down payment on repairs at these bases, as well as at Camp Lejeune, but in the meantime, this \$1.5 billion could have jump started repairs months ago. Once again, the wall came first, and the military came last.

In each case, the Pentagon didn't ask me to approve these transfers as it normally does. As vice chair of the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, I have different priorities, the ones I have mentioned, and so they went around me and the rest of Congress.

Also still to come is the \$3.6 billion from cancelling important military construction projects. The damage continues to pile up. These harmful decisions will continue until my Republican colleagues side with our military over a campaign pledge. I hope they think long and hard about which one of those is more important.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, once again, our Republican colleagues are spending another week rubberstamping President Trump's extreme nominees.

Daniel Collins, nominated to a California Ninth Circuit seat, received a vote over the objection of both of California's Senators.

Before this year, a judicial nominee had never been confirmed over the objection of both home State Senators. Mr. Collins's confirmation marked the sixth time it has happened this year.

This Republican Senate has effectively killed the blue slip for circuit court nominations. This is a precedent that could come back to haunt each of our States. My Republican colleagues who are voting repeatedly to override home State Senators' objections may come to regret those votes someday.

I opposed the Collins nomination. I agree with Senators Feinstein and Harris that Collins has "a history of taking strong litigation positions for no reason other than attempting to overturn precedent and push legal boundaries."

I am particularly troubled by his extensive representation of the tobacco industry and his inadequate recusal commitment when it comes to matters involving his former tobacco industry clients.

The district court nominees scheduled for votes this week also have a

long history of advancing extreme ideological views.

When it comes to abortion, North Carolina district court nominee Kenneth Bell once wrote in an op-ed, "There is no middle ground." Missouri district court nominee Stephen Clark has spent much of his legal career litigating against reproductive rights and access to contraceptives.

Utah district court nominee Howard Nielson wrote a memo for the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel, arguing that the Geneva Conventions, which prohibit torture, do not apply to civilians captured abroad.

DC district nominee Carl Nichols has advanced extreme views of Executive power, including arguing that Presidents and Presidential aides have absolute immunity from congressional process.

I opposed these extreme nominees, and I regret that the Senate's advice and consent process has become an exercise in Republican rubberstamping. This institution can and should do better.

ALBERTO CURAMIL

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President I want to bring to the Senate's attention the story and the example of Alberto Curamil, an environmental activist who is a member of the indigenous Mapuche people in Chile's Araucania region. The Mapuche are Chile's largest indigenous group, and since the 1800s they have struggled to protect their culture, territory, rivers, forests, and natural resources against encroachment and destruction by settlers and energy companies that have often acted with impunity and the backing of the government. Mr. Curamil has dedicated his life to this cause. It is the existential struggle of indigenous people in scores of countries as the insatiable global demand for energy, arable land, water, timber, oil, gas, and minerals threatens their ancestral lands and way of life.

Several years ago, during a prolonged drought in Chile, the Ministry of Energy announced a plan for two large hydroelectric projects in Araucania, without consulting the Mapuche people who live there. The projects would reportedly divert more than 500 million gallons of water for power generation, severely limiting water flow and damaging the ecosystem of the Cautin River on which many of the Mapuche people depend for survival.

Mr. Curamil, who has three children, lives on the outskirts of the town of Curacautin. He is a farmer who raises animals. His wife teaches the Mapuche language. Fearing what the harm to the river would mean for his people, he organized Mapuche and non-Mapuche, environmental organizations, lawyers, and academics to try to stop the projects. In public protests and in court, they argued that the government had ignored Chilean law which