

Russians or any other foreign power didn't interfere. Does Leader McCONNELL object to auditing our elections to make sure the outcomes are accurate? Are election audits partisan?

Making sure the States and localities have adequate resources to update and maintain election infrastructure—does Leader McCONNELL oppose that, when 21 attorneys general have said they don't have enough money now to guard their election processes and machines from manipulation by Russia or others?

So that is “our partisan wish list”—paper ballots, election audits, and money to protect us from the Russians. If Leader McCONNELL opposes these policies, fine, but let him say so. I repeat, protecting our election from Russian interference is not a Democratic issue or a Republican issue or an Independent issue, and it is not a liberal issue or a conservative issue. It is not a moderate issue. It is an issue that goes to the wellspring of our democracy and something the Founding Fathers warned about—foreign interference. James Madison, Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, and Benjamin Franklin all were worried about foreign interference in our elections, and now Leader McCONNELL calls it partisan to worry about it? Please.

If Leader McCONNELL wants to debate other legislation than what we propose and what has passed the House—legislation like the FIRE Act or the Duty to Report Act or the Prevention of Foreign Interference with Elections Act—bring it on. Let's do it. If Leader McCONNELL wants to address election security in the appropriations process, we would welcome his support on an amendment to send more funding to the States. We want to get something done on election security because this is not about party. This is a matter of national security. This is about the sanctity of elections, something for which Americans have died for generations. It is not partisan at all. It is the wellspring of our democracy.

But so long as the Senate Republicans prevent legislation from reaching the floor, so long as they oppose additional appropriations to the States, so long as they malign election security provisions as “partisan wish lists,” the critics are right to say that Leader McCONNELL and Republican Senators are blocking election security because, at the moment, that is true.

VENEZUELA

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, on one last subject, after I conclude my remarks, I will yield to my friend, colleague, and former roommate from Illinois, who will ask this body to take up and pass what I believe is a very important measure, temporary protected status for Venezuelans currently residing in the United States.

Last week, the House passed bipartisan legislation that would grant these protections—a lifeline to families

who are facing a forced return to unstable and dangerous situations in their country.

Few nations, outside wartime, have endured the economic, humanitarian, and political devastation that Venezuela endures today. Hospitals and pharmacies lack basic medicines. The rate of violent crime has risen sharply, and 300,000 children are at risk of dying from malnutrition. Venezuela clearly meets the standard for temporary protected status. The situation is too dire and too dangerous for Venezuelan nationals to return to the country.

So I am glad the House has taken action to pass these temporary protections on a bipartisan basis, and the Senate should follow suit. The President could have acted on his own to help Venezuelans living in America, but he has repeatedly denied congressional requests to extend TPS relief for them during this critical time of transition from the despotic regime of Nicolas Maduro. President Trump's inaction has compelled Congress to act.

So I salute my friend, Senator DURBIN, as well as Senator MENENDEZ, our two leaders on this issue, as they ask the Senate to take up the House-passed TPS bill. I hope, earnestly, that our friends on the other side will let it go through.

I suggest the absence of a quorum for a moment so I might confer with the Senator from Illinois.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

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

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

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Michael T. Liburdi, of Arizona, to be United States District Judge for the District of Arizona.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

VENEZUELA

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I want to thank the leader, Senator SCHUMER from New York, for his introduction of the remarks I am about to make. But before I do, let me preface it by saying that I couldn't agree with him more. When you take a look at this empty Senate Chamber and realize we are in session this week with the possibility of bringing important legislation to the floor, you have to ask the obvious question: Where is everybody? Why aren't we acting like a Senate? Why are we meeting and having speeches instead of debate on important legislation? What could be more important than the security of an election?

We have a lot of young people across America. We say to them: Register to vote. Your vote makes a difference. You get to choose the leaders for this country's future. Be sure and vote.

But we have to be honest with you. Your vote is under attack—first, by apathy—people don't register and they don't vote—and second, by outside foreign influence and forces.

We know what happened 4 years ago in the Presidential election. The Russians tried to invade the U.S. electoral process and change it. I know it firsthand because it happened first in the State of Illinois. Turns out someone put together a computer program that had a little opening in it, a little hole, and that is all they needed. Sitting in Moscow, these folks in front of computers were searching day in and day out for ways to get into the voters' list in Illinois, and they were successful. They were successful in invading the voting list, the official records of our State on the people who were eligible to vote. They could have done some mischievous things. They could have disrupted our election. Thank goodness they didn't, but it would have been as simple as going through and just changing the addresses, one digit in the address of every registered voter, so when that voter came to vote, the ID card or information given to the judge at the election place wouldn't match up in terms of their address with the official record. That meant they would have voted with a provisional ballot, and those ballots would have stacked up with the thousands of people who could have been victimized by the Russians in my State of Illinois.

We said very publicly—we were the first State to say publicly: The Russians have done this to us.

We didn't see any changes in the voter file. We knew they had the capacity and ability to do it, but they didn't. We have known ever since that they have been attacking our electoral process.

Why didn't we hear about it as much in the most recent election in 2018? Well, specifically because we were in the circumstance where we were fighting it. Our intelligence agencies were fighting it.

So this is a valid issue, an important issue, and it is one that I hope Leader