

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

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

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

(Ms. ERNST assumed the Chair.)

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BOOZMAN). 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 to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination Brian McGuire, of New York, to be a Deputy Under Secretary of the Treasury.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

UKRAINE

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, I just listened to the majority leader come to the floor and tell Members of the Senate that they should close their eyes and box their ears to the current scandal that is engulfing the White House and the Trump administration. I heard the majority leader accuse Democrats of “politicizing” President Trump’s demand that the Government of Ukraine interfere in the 2020 election. That is a laughable charge, and it is not going to silence us on this matter of grave importance.

First of all, I have no idea what it means to politicize something these days. News flash: We are politicians. We practice politics. That is our job. I get told very often that I am politicizing gun violence when I suggest that maybe we should pass laws in order to change the daily trajectory of violence in this country. Yet the very reason we are here is to protect the safety of our constituents and to protect the sanctity of our democracy.

What we are standing up for right now is the rule of law, and I hope, over the course of this week, my Republican colleagues will join us in that basic responsibility that Members of the Senate and House of Representatives have.

We see the rule of law slipping away from us right now. We see our Nation being turned into a banana republic where the President can do anything he wants and turn the organs of state into his permanent political machine—his means of crushing his opponents. Today we see that many of my Republican colleagues are not just letting it happen but facilitating it.

There has to be a line that the President cannot cross. There has to be a moment when we all stand up and say: This has gone too far.

The President has admitted this weekend to asking a foreign leader to open an investigation into one of his political opponents as a means of advancing himself politically. That is not allowed in a democracy. That fundamentally corrupts the foreign policy of our Nation. It makes us all less safe when foreign governments now wonder whether they are going to be enlisted into the political operation of the President of the United States. This has always been a no-go area for Democratic and Republican administrations because we understand the vast power the Presidency has. If the President chooses to use that power and the leverage he has over people in this country and in other countries to do his political bidding, then there is nothing to protect any of us from the executive branch.

The idea that the President can openly admit that he is asking a foreign government to get involved in his political reelection campaign—and believe that he will get away with it—suggests a belief in the impunity surrounding his office. We should all be concerned about that.

At the very least, if my Republican colleagues don’t share my grave alarm at the disclosures of the last 48 hours, then we should at least agree that the whistleblower complaint needs to come before the Congress unredacted. There is no fuzzy penumbra around this law. It is clear as day. If a whistleblower makes a complaint that is deemed urgent in nature, it must be presented to the Congress. The President cannot hold it back; the executive branch cannot make it a secret.

What makes it worse is that the President seems to be playing a game with this whistleblower complaint. He seems to be teasing out little bits of information that are contained in it here and there in order to play to his political advantage. It is even worse than holding back the complaint from us. He is now using pieces of it to try to gain advantage over his political opponents.

At the very least, over the next 24 hours, we need to come to a conclusion that the law needs to be followed. If the President can withhold from us whistleblower complaints that are not

flattering to him—that potentially implicate him—then what is the point of having a whistleblower law? What is the point of having a process to protect people who are uncovering corruption in the administration if the administration can keep those complaints secret?

Let’s just be honest. If this President gets away with it, the next Democratic President can get away with it, and the next Republican President can get away with it. We will have lost all of our power to see into the wrongdoing of an administration. There will be a day when Republicans want to see into potential wrongdoing of an administration of the opposite party, but that will be all gone if we don’t, at the very least, come to the conclusion that we need to see it as the law states.

That is just the beginning because I think—as the President has advertised—that complaint is going to show he did, indeed, try to pressure a foreign government to conduct investigations into one of his political opponents. I think this is a really serious moment for the country. I think it is a really serious moment for the prerogatives of the article I branch.

I understand that my Republican colleagues may not be ready to talk about consequences for the administration for their wrongdoing, but, at the very least, we need to come together and make sure we have all of the information necessary.

By the way, it doesn’t end with the whistleblower complaint because the whistleblower complaint is likely going to raise even more questions that we are going to have to answer. We have a duty to then go out and find additional information.

For many, the President’s admission of guilt may be enough to make a determination about what the next steps are. But for those who aren’t persuaded that there have to be consequences for the President’s admission of corruption, then we should use the organs at our disposal to try to figure out the rest of the details surrounding this incident or series of incidents. What kinds of contacts have the President’s representatives been having with the Ukrainian Government? Has the State Department been involved in trying to do the President’s political bidding in and around Ukraine? How many people in the administration knew about this? Who tried to stop it? Who has been involved in keeping the whistleblower complaint from us? There are so many questions that need to be answered here, and it should be our responsibility to get to the bottom of all of them.

I think this is a really serious moment for this country. I think the minute the President is able to turn the foreign policy of this Nation into a vehicle for his own political advancement is the day that democracy, as we know it, slips away from us. If we aren’t ready to have a bipartisan conversation about consequences and remedies this week, then let’s at least have