

Luck, of Florida—the President’s impressive nominee—to be a U.S. circuit judge for the 11th Circuit. Then we will consider Justice Barbara Lagoa, who has also been nominated to the 11th Circuit. Both are impressive nominees who have sterling qualifications—two more fine choices by President Trump. Finally, the Senate will turn its attention to the diplomatic corps and confirm Adrian Zuckerman, of New Jersey, to serve as the Ambassador to Romania.

I hope each of my colleagues will join me in supporting all three confirmations as the Senate continues to give the American people the government for which they voted.

HONG KONG

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, on a final matter, in the last few days, the reports and images coming out of Hong Kong have become even more disturbing. The police crackdown on Hongkongers who are standing up for their freedom and their region’s autonomy has intensified.

University campuses now literally look like war zones, with government forces laying siege to groups of students and other protesters. Many observers feel the situation may be verging on something truly terrible. In the midst of this crackdown, just today, Hong Kong’s High Court ruled against the executive and actually in favor of the protesters’ rights—yet another signal it is the government that is acting beyond the bounds of its authorities.

This latest escalation against Hongkongers comes as Beijing faces international fallout from leaked documents that delineate the government’s chilling, systematic campaign against ethnic minorities in another supposedly autonomous region, Xinjiang—hundreds of pages of internal documents from the Chinese Communist Party government. It is a handbook for this Orwellian campaign to effectively erase a religious and ethnic minority in a region that, again, is supposed to be legally distinct from the rest of China. This effort is being conducted using “organs of dictatorship” and “absolutely no mercy.”

The protesters are not the problem. It is Beijing and the Hong Kong leadership that must deescalate. The Communist Party must know it will hurt them catastrophically if it turns Hong Kong into some 21st century version of Tiananmen Square. The United States would not forget it, and neither would China’s other trading partners all across the world.

So what can the United States do?

In September, I worked to add language to the State and Foreign Operations appropriations bill to modify the reporting requirements of the 1992 Hong Kong Policy Act, which, by the way, was my bill back in 1992. My additions would work to expose the current tools the Chinese Communist govern-

ment is using to subvert the autonomy of Hong Kong and to allow the U.S. Government to pay for the legal support for Hong Kong’s democracy activists.

One important step to help Hong Kong is for the House and Senate Democrats to finally get to “yes” on the appropriations process.

Last week, I had a productive meeting with the senior Senator from Florida on the subject of revising and extending the Hong Kong Policy Act through new legislation. As I indicated, I authored the original bill back in 1992 and have been keenly interested in Hong Kong’s status for decades. So I appreciate the leadership Senator RUBIO and others have shown and hope we can find a way to move this important bill. Yet, while I support additional legislation, the United States does not need to wait for new laws to act further. There are already significant tools at the administration’s disposal, and I strongly encourage them to use them.

I have been encouraged to hear clear statements on China from key members of President Trump’s team in recent months. I would encourage this President, who has seen Chinese behavior for what it is with a clarity that others have lacked, not to shy away from speaking out on Hong Kong himself. The world should hear from him directly that the United States stands with these brave men and women.

This administration has rightly understood what prior administrations have entirely missed. The old consensus was that economic modernization in China would automatically import our values of freedom and human dignity into their society. Now, every day reminds us that this simply has not happened. Instead, Beijing is using modern technology it has obtained through integration with the West to further its political and social control over its own population and expand China’s reach beyond its shores.

So, rather than focusing solely on trade, I encourage the administration to make Hong Kong’s autonomy a key topic within our bilateral diplomacy. The administration should also take advantage of the tools Congress has already provided in Global Magnitsky to target the individuals who are responsible for egregious human rights abuses. In Xinjiang and Hong Kong, the world is seeing the true face of the Communist Party of China.

The United States has a role to play in standing up for the universal principles of human rights, and I am confident we will fulfill it. Yet our allies and partners must also ask themselves whether they are prepared to live in a world that is being increasingly shaped by those who show absolutely no mercy to religious and ethnic minorities and who confront peaceful protest with violence.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The 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 (Ms. ERNST). Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

IMPEACHMENT

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, our Republican friends have spent the past several weeks accusing Democrats of being unable to work on serious issues to help the American people because the impeachment inquiry into President Trump is such a distraction. The Republican leader has repeated this absurd claim on the Senate floor, and the President’s reelection campaign is now running ads saying Democrats refuse to work on infrastructure or healthcare or drugs because of impeachment. These ads turn truth inside out. Simply put, these ads are a lie.

Senate Democrats put together a trillion-dollar infrastructure plan that would create 15 million jobs. We did that 3 years ago. Instead of working with us on that goal, President Trump walked out of the meeting on infrastructure with Speaker PELOSI and me. We haven’t heard a peep out of the administration since then. That was long before impeachment began. We haven’t heard from the Republicans on what they want to do on healthcare. We haven’t heard from the President on a proposal he sent us on drug prices. So who is holding things up?

This Senate has been a legislative graveyard for months and months and months. It just amazes me the gall, the temerity that the President and our Republican friends have to say that Democrats, because of impeachment, are not moving forward. We have 218 bills that the House sent us. We haven’t had one discussion here on impeachment. It has taken up no time.

Leader McCONNELL, do you want to get things done? Put one of those bills on the floor. Let us have debate.

Republican Senators, go to McCONNELL. Tell him you want to do some stuff on the floor; that you want to legislate.

No, no, we hear silence—abject, shaky-knee silence—because our Republican friends, and I imagine the leader, are just afraid of President Trump. When he makes up these lies, they just go right along.

Many Republicans have even complained that Leader McCONNELL has turned the Senate into a legislative graveyard. So the idea that the impeachment inquiry is preventing Congress from debating legislation on infrastructure or prescription drugs or healthcare or any other matter is completely absurd. Democrats are happy

and eager to work on those issues. Senate Democrats are waiting with bated breath for the Republican leader to put any of these bills on the floor or for any Republican to speak out and demand they go on the floor. The silence of our Republican colleagues indicates that they are going along with this strategy as well.

We meet this week in the Senate, and the majority leader has, once again, scheduled no legislative business on the floor—none. We are not debating impeachment. We are not discussing impeachment. For 3 weeks in a row, there has been not one legislative piece, not one legislative bill. That is all the evidence one needs to know which party is blocking progress in the Chamber.

The American people know it. When they are asked what they think of the Republicans in the Senate and the Republicans in Congress, the marks are very low. I imagine that is because they are getting nothing done.

Concerning the impeachment inquiry itself, the public hearings last week have brought up many troubling allegations, including the startling revelation that Ambassador Gordon Sondland told another State Department official that the President had made clear that he cares more about Ukraine investigating the Bidens than about helping Ukraine itself. The revelation added to an already substantial body of evidence that the President may—may—have abused the powers of his public office for personal political gain. I say “may” because we haven’t had the trial yet here in the Senate, should the House vote on articles of impeachment.

The President is now saying all this stuff is false; that all these witnesses are not telling the truth.

If the President believes that these witnesses are false and that the facts that are coming out of the Senate impeachment hearings are false, he should testify under oath in the House. If he wishes to present evidence to the contrary, he should do it not by tweet but by testimony under oath.

I wholeheartedly agree with Speaker PELOSI’s invitation to President Trump yesterday to testify in the House impeachment inquiry—not by tweeting and not by sending a note but by coming forward in person under oath, and let’s see what the President rejects. If the President doesn’t agree with what he has heard in public hearings and he has evidence he would like to present, he can come to the committee and testify and answer questions under oath.

He should allow his advisers, who are in fact witnesses in these matters, to testify under oath as well. The President shouldn’t spread falsehoods about the witnesses on Twitter. He should come to Congress and make his case. He should free up Pompeo and Mulvaney and all the others who might have real knowledge and let them testify.

The President and his allies in Congress criticized the testimony for being

secondhand in nature, while at the same time blocking those individuals with firsthand knowledge from testifying. Let’s end that particular hypocrisy.

President Trump, come testify. Allow your advisers to testify. If you refuse to come before the committee after Speaker PELOSI’s invitation and if you don’t let the people around you come before the committee, one question will loom before the American people: What is President Trump hiding, and why is he personally afraid to confront the facts?

Before I yield the floor, I will address a tragic pattern that has emerged in this Trump Presidency that is different from the previous one but very troubling. Too often—it seems almost weekly—President Trump announces that he is considering or even supporting a policy on which there is some bipartisan agreement and then backs off that position a few days, a few weeks, or a few months later. If there is an immediate issue, President Trump seems almost afraid not to go along with what the public wants, but because his integrity is so minimal, he must not really mean it because he just reverses himself.

After the mass shootings in El Paso and Dayton this summer, President Trump said he was considering “very strong background checks” as a response to the violence. Leader MCCONNELL echoed him. He said that a debate on gun violence would be front and center in the Senate in September.

Now 3 months later, after another high school shooting in Santa Clarita, CA, another mass shooting at a neighborhood party in Fresno, and another shooting at a Walmart in Oklahoma as recently as this morning, it has become painfully clear that President Trump and Leader MCCONNELL caved to the corrupt leadership of the NRA once again and will not move legislation to address gun violence. President Trump would rather protect his political interests than protect American lives.

Gun violence isn’t the only issue where President Trump has promised bold action, only to back off. We heard a new one this morning. Recent reports suggest the President is now wavering on his promise to ban flavored e-cigarettes, which are marketed toward our children. Once again the reporting says that the President backed off after hearing from industry lobbyists that the ban might hurt the President politically.

It is the same pattern. The President promises to do something about a serious issue—in some cases, an issue that threatens the lives of our children—and then backs off and reverses himself once the special interests weigh in.

President Trump, it is not too late. Do what you said you were going to do. It is not that hard. Ban these flavored e-cigarettes. When e-cigarettes are marketed as Gummy Bear or Captain Crunch, they are not aimed at adults; they are aimed at getting kids in high

school and junior high school—maybe even younger—to start vaping, which will ultimately harm them.

Another example occurred yesterday and again today. The Trump administration announced that it would extend a temporary license granted to Huawei, a Chinese telecom giant that our intelligence and defense agencies have deemed a national security threat. Once again President Trump failed to match his tough talk with appropriate action. If President Trump and his Commerce Department agree that Huawei is a national security threat, they ought to start acting like it. Every time President Trump goes easy on Huawei, the Chinese Communist Party takes that as a signal that they can hurt American jobs and threaten our security without repercussion.

I would urge the President to read an editorial by, I believe it is the Secretary of the Air Force in today’s Wall Street Journal—I read it this afternoon—that says what the security threat of allowing Huawei into this country would be to our Armed Forces, to our military men and women, and to our country as a whole.

I publicly praise the President and his administration when they have done the right thing. I praised the Trump administration when it announced it was going to ban flavored e-cigarettes. I praised the administration when it announced it was going to be tough on Huawei. But announcements don’t make the grade. When you back off, when you waver, when you stammer, all these announcements mean nothing. And the American people do remember it. There is an accounting.

Like on the issue of background checks and gun safety, you just can’t believe the President and his administration when they say they are going to do something. So many times when the President says he is considering some strong, bipartisan action, he backs off, usually at the behest of lobbyists or some special interests. On these issues and several others, the President has shown a profound lack of political courage. It is one of the many reasons why the President and this Republican Senate, which shivers in obeisance to him, have accomplished so little for the American people.

I yield the floor, and 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. MURKOWSKI. 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.