

Alas, our Democratic colleagues have not been willing to budge on any of those things. As a result, while the Senate waits for the House to send us short-term funding legislation, we will spend our time on the personnel business.

Yesterday, we advanced the nomination of Justice Robert Luck, of Florida, to be a U.S. circuit judge for the Eleventh Circuit, with the support of a bipartisan majority.

Justice Luck brings an impressive and well-rounded legal record, including a clerkship on the Eleventh Circuit, service in the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Florida, and years spent ruling from the State bench.

Today, we will also advance the nomination of Justice Barbara Lagoa, of Florida, also to serve on the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals. A graduate of Columbia University School of Law, Justice Lagoa has spent years practicing law, serving as a Federal prosecutor, and ruling from both the State appellate bench and the Florida Supreme Court.

I look forward to confirming both of these impressive nominees, along with Adrian Zuckerman, the President's nominee to serve as our Nation's Ambassador to Romania.

THE MIDDLE EAST

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, on a final matter, I spoke yesterday about the courageous people of Hong Kong who are standing up to Beijing and speaking up for their freedoms. But Hongkongers are not alone in bravely speaking up at this time. The Middle East continues to be swept by widespread and cross-sectarian demonstrations.

In Lebanon, in Iraq, and in Iran, millions are demanding a better future, greater justice, less corruption, and more democracy from their governments. These protests expand three countries. Each is unique, but one common thread connects them: Iran.

For years, Iran has systematically sought to undermine the territorial integrity and manipulate the politics of countries all across the Middle East. Nowhere is this more apparent than in Lebanon and Iraq, where Iranian proxies have challenged the very sovereignty of the state.

In Lebanon, Iran backs Hezbollah, the terrorist group that has become a dominant political player. Hezbollah has become a state within a state. Its weapons and fighters do not work to defend the Lebanese state but to embroil it in Syria's civil war and imperil its security by threatening Israel with precision rockets.

In Iraq, Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps has spent years sponsoring Shia militias and proxies that are more loyal to Tehran than to Baghdad or to the people of Iraq.

In both of these countries, Tehran has used and promoted the use of force

to acquire power and to acquire influence. A few weeks ago, the leader of Iran's terrorist Quds Force reportedly flew to Iraq for secret meetings to guide Iraqi leaders through the protests there.

Here is what this Iranian thug told the Iraqis: "We in Iran know how to deal with protests." Enough said.

Well, a violent crackdown on peaceful protesters is not going to resolve anything. What Iraqi and Lebanese leaders must do is stop listening to the poisonous advice of Iranian tyrants, who are losing their own grip on their own people, and start addressing their own citizens' demands for transparency and reform.

Iraq and Lebanon should give their people what they want—less corruption, less malign foreign influence, more opportunity, and the rule of law.

That is the path forward for Iraq and Lebanon. Commit to prosperity and pluralism at home, combat corruption and injustice within all sects and confessions, protect the sovereignty of your country, pursue peace with your neighbors, and enjoy support from the United States as well.

I would note that in contrast to Hezbollah's thugs, Lebanon's Armed Forces by most accounts continue to be one of Lebanon's few institutions of national unity. The LAF has respected the rights of protesters, protected them from violence, and sought to de-escalate tensions on the street.

I know the U.S. military believes its training and partnership with the LAF is paying off, helping it to be a more professional and responsible security force.

So while these events transpire in Iraq and Lebanon, the Iranian people themselves are also engaging in their own demonstrations. Iran used to be a moderate, open, and prosperous society. It could be again. Now tens of thousands of Iranian people themselves are raising their voices in righteous anger at what has become of their living conditions and their country. The Iranian people are feeling the pain inflicted by the brutality, selfishness, and extremism of their ruling class.

The regime seems to be doing all it can to put a stop to this. Reports over the weekend indicated an enormous, unprecedented internet blackout aimed at keeping Iranians in the dark and suggests Iranian leaders are threatening yet another violent crackdown against their own citizens.

But Iran's leaders know exactly what must be done to alter the course of their once-great country and unlock a better future for its citizens. Iran needs to stop pursuing nuclear weapons and long-range missile capabilities, stop supporting terror and cyber offensives, stop causing bloodshed to weaken its neighbors, and stop the horrific mistreatment of its own people.

There is an entire civilized world full of diverse nations that get by just fine—just fine—without engaging in any of these rogue state activities. Iran

engages in all of them. Iranian leaders will either listen to their own citizens and start behaving like a normal nation or they will be treated more and more like the backward pariahs they have become.

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.

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

HONG KONG

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, over the past few days and weeks, reports about the democratic protests in Hong Kong have grown more and more troubling. The authorities in Hong Kong have cracked down violently on some of the protesters, firing hundreds of rounds of tear gas at a local university and even using lethal force in a few tragic situations. As many have observed, some of the pictures coming out of Hong Kong are reminiscent of a war zone.

Yesterday, the Chinese Communist Party dealt another blow to Hong Kong's special status, criticizing the ruling by the territory's High Court that reversed the Hong Kong Government's ban on masks. The Communist Party declared that only the Chinese legislature has the right to decide whether Hong Kong's laws are consistent with the Hong Kong basic law and that no other authority has the right to make these judgments. That assertion by the Chinese Communist Party is a direct assault on Hong Kong's judicial independence. Make no mistake about it, this Communist Party is cruel and relentless in cracking down on any dissent in every part of China. What they are doing to the Uighurs at the other end of the Chinese country—far away from Hong Kong—is just brutal and awful.

We in the United States stand in solidarity with the democratic protesters, who have every right to assemble and petition their government for the rights of the citizens of Hong Kong. The administration and the President himself should voice their support for the protesters in Hong Kong, which would send an important message to the Chinese Communist Party not to get involved or in any way escalate the situation. Secretary Pompeo's call for calm yesterday is weak tea—not close to enough. Beyond the Presidential statement, there are actions we can take here in Congress because, frankly, I have been very disappointed that the President, in this dramatic situation