

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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

PROTESTS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, 1 week ago today, a White police officer in Minneapolis, MN, knelt on the neck of an African-American man named George Floyd, pinning him to the ground for over 8 minutes as he pled for his life. The officer callously refused to heed those calls, standing up only after Mr. Floyd was unresponsive. Mr. Floyd was pronounced dead shortly thereafter. It was 8 minutes—8 minutes—that he was pinned there.

Today, 8 days later, our Nation is reeling. It is reeling over the injustice and senselessness of George Floyd's death, reeling over the memory of Ahmaud Arbery, Michael Brown, Breonna Taylor, Eric Garner, and the unimaginable number of innocent lives that were taken in similar circumstances. Our Nation is reeling from centuries of racial injustice, a legacy as old as the Nation itself and one that haunts us to this day.

It took two and a half centuries and the Civil War to finally end slavery in America. It was 100 years more until the descendants of those newly freed men and women could fully enjoy the rights of citizenship. Even today, slavery is still with us. Its terrible legacy and evil effects are felt in real and discernible ways every single day.

When the French historian Alexis de Tocqueville visited America in the 1830s, with amazing prescience he predicted that the United States would become a great nation—the greatest in the world—even though at the time we were a fledgling country, compared to the great powers of Europe. But he also said that the one thing that could doom our Nation was racism and racial prejudice. His words ring true today.

The racial disparities in our criminal justice system have been on full display, but these disparities permeate not just the criminal justice system but all of society. There are glaring racial disparities in healthcare and housing, racial disparities in income and in wealth, in the board room and at the ballot box, on our streets and in our schools. These disparities have been with us a very long time, but COVID has placed a magnifying glass on them. Perhaps most evident and immediate, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to

infect and kill African Americans at a disproportionate rate. We are confronted by the all too often fatal consequences of those disparities on a daily basis.

George Floyd's killing touched off justified protests and demonstrations across the country, driven by Americans of every age, color, and creed who were distressed and upset, frightened and angry by the America they see and feel compelled to change. The overwhelmingly peaceful protests do honor to the generations of Americans who stood up and sat in and shouted at the top of their lungs in the urgent mission to make America a more perfect union. The small minority who exploit the moment for violence and mayhem are wrong and do not advance the cause of justice.

I would note that while over 4,000 protesters have been arrested in the last week, only 1 in 4 of the police officers involved in the killing of George Floyd has been arrested. While that statistic does not excuse the violence we have seen, it certainly helps to explain the frustration and anger right now.

There is accountability when everyday citizens and protesters violate the law, but that same accountability is far too often lacking when law enforcement violates the law, and we have to fix that. We must work to bring accountability to police departments so that bad actors are not shielded from culpability and those many officers who do the job the right way are incentivized and rewarded.

We must reform our laws and our police practices so that events like George Floyd's killing are far less likely in the first place. There are many examples of departments that have made strides at improving community relations, transparency, and accountability, while reducing unwarranted violence and racial bias. We need to build on those best practices and get all of our police agencies to adopt them.

We must invest in services and programs necessary to deal with issues unrelated to law enforcement, such as housing and mental health, rather than asking police officers to be responsible for addressing all of our society's challenges. There are many ways to address the broader disparities in our society, the systemic racism, and the injustice that follows America around like a shackle in our laws, in our customs, and in too many of our hearts. We have to make progress on these issues right now—not later, not next year, not after the next George Floyd but right now.

Senate Democrats will be confronting and addressing all of these issues this week, and many of my colleagues will prepare legislative plans of action. We will listen to experts on these issues and our constituents who face these challenges on a daily basis. Be sure of this: We will propose and push for bold action.

Leader McCONNELL, however, will decide whether or not the Senate will

take any of that action. At the moment, he has reserved the floor of the Senate for the confirmation of several rightwing judges, many of whom will become part of the very problem we are now discussing: a justice system that doesn't work for everyone, a biased system.

These are judges who were preselected specifically because of their antipathy to voting rights and civil rights and criminal justice balance and fairness. Time and again, the Republican majority has confirmed judicial nominees who pledge loyalty to an ideological doctrine that would exacerbate the very inequalities that have been laid bare in recent weeks and months. Leader McCONNELL is doing that this week, once again.

At this delicate time, the Senate should lead on these issues rather than aggravate the problem. Leader McCONNELL should commit to put a law enforcement reform bill on the floor of the Senate before July 4. There shouldn't be hearings on President Trump's wild conspiracies about the 2016 election or a month of rightwing, anti-civil rights judicial nominees. As the COVID pandemic continues to rage and Americans are taking to the streets to express their anger at police violence and racial injustice, the Republican majority in the Senate must focus on the national crisis at our doorstep.

Today—just today—the CBO is expected to release an estimate of the damage to our economy caused by the pandemic. If the current trends continue, the CBO predicts a jaw-dropping \$16 trillion reduction in economic growth over the next decade—\$16 trillion.

There are 40 million Americans currently unemployed. Where is the urgency from Senate Republicans to address the economic catastrophe in our country, a catastrophe that, like police violence, will disproportionately affect African Americans and other Americans of color?

We should address both these issues—COVID and police violence—this month, not spend time on fringe conspiracy theories and not spend time on putting rightwing judges who have shown no sympathy to civil rights and racial justice and harmony on the floor of the Senate.

This is a moment that cries out for leadership, for compassion, for sympathy, for understanding, for action, and for our leaders to bring us together instead of letting events tear us apart. But the leader of our country, the President of the United States, struggles—struggles—to summon even an ounce of humanity in this time of turmoil.

The President has reacted to the pain and anger in the country by playing politics and encouraging police to be tougher on protesters by bragging about his reelection prospects and his personal safety inside the White House. A Presidential tweet invoked a Miami