

for our country. We will turn to legislation to strengthen the implementation of the Paycheck Protection Program for the workers and small businesses that are struggling to weather this storm. We will consider a bipartisan bill from Senators DAINES and GARDNER to safeguard America's abundant public lands. For the 60th consecutive year, we will also take up the National Defense Authorization Act to help guide the strategic and operational priorities of our Nation's Armed Forces in the face of evolving threats.

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, make no mistake, the foreign actors who seek to harm the United States have not let up while we have attended to other problems. For example, in Afghanistan, despite agreeing just months ago to engage in further peace negotiations with the Afghan Government and sever its ties with al-Qaida, the Taliban has, instead, continued its violent campaign against the Afghan people.

President Trump has expressed frustration with the Taliban's failures and is reportedly considering withdrawing from Afghanistan even more rapidly. Yet, as we weigh our options, we must not forget the painful lessons of the last administration's mistakes.

Former President Obama and Vice President Biden were intent on beating a hasty retreat from Iraq, conditions on the ground notwithstanding. Just as many of us warned at the time, their recklessness left a vacuum that terrorists and Iran readily filled. ISIS flourished. Tragically, the rest is history. The resulting chaos threatened our interests and drew American efforts back into the region.

By contrast, the Trump administration has seen a number of successes in this difficult region. The President's strategy has secured a territorial defeat of ISIS. It has put new pressure on Iran and given the Iraqi people a fighting chance, which their new government seems inclined to take.

Yet helping Iraq stand up to Iranian influence will not be an overnight project. Iran wants to drive the United States from the region. China and Russia would also be thrilled with a reduction of American presence and influence there. So, as we struggle to clean up the broken pieces of one rushed withdrawal, we need to avoid repeating those mistakes somewhere else.

I applaud the Trump administration for its approach thus far in Afghanistan. The President has taken constraints off U.S. forces. We have helped Afghan forces go after the terrorists. We have ratcheted up the costs on the Taliban, bolstered the Afghan forces that bear the brunt of the violence, and won international support for our mission there. We have done all of this with fewer resources and fewer personnel than during the previous two

administrations. The President's strategy and diplomacy have helped create a path for discussions among Afghans—the only thing that could actually secure the country's future.

If these qualified successes continue, it would be appropriate to further reduce our American presence as certain conditions are met, but we must retain enough forces and influence to maintain our counterterrorism capabilities. Given recent reports and our longstanding experience, we cannot just trust the Taliban will sever ties to al-Qaida and other terrorist networks. We need to be vigilant. We need to maintain enough presence to judge whether the Taliban complies with agreements and help the Afghan Government impose consequences if it does not. We need to maintain enough presence to preserve our strategic foothold against ISIS, the Haqqani Network, and al-Qaida. We should also maintain enough presence to help prevent a full replay of Iraq or Syria—a bloodbath and a human rights collapse, particularly for generations of Afghan women.

Last year, a bipartisan supermajority in the Senate voted for an amendment I authored, which warned against precipitous withdrawals from Afghanistan and Syria in ways that could jeopardize the hard-won progress we have attained, embolden Iran and Russia, and create more pain for us and everyone else in the future.

Our enemies would be thrilled if the United States would grow too tired to continue the hard work of standing with our partners, confronting our adversaries, and maintaining measured leadership that projects our security around the world. Our enemies would be delighted if we would grow too weary to act in our own long-term interest. We must not give them that satisfaction.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. 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 of James H. Anderson, of Virginia, to be a Deputy Under Secretary of Defense.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. 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 (Mrs. LOEFFLER). Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

PROTESTS AND BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, this has been a very difficult week after what has been a very difficult few months. A nation, beleaguered by disease and economic depression, has once again come face-to-face with the racial injustice that infects our society. The death of George Floyd in police custody was a searing reminder of a long list of unarmed African Americans whose lives have been taken under similar circumstances—Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and too many others—a well of grief and loss and pain too deep to express. It was a searing reminder of the bigotry and discrimination that African Americans encounter as part of their daily reality.

That is why so many Americans of all ages, colors, and faiths are out in the streets protesting right now. They are fed up with racial injustice in this country and want to see some change. Here in the Senate, Member after Member has come to the floor to share support for the same cause.

Yesterday, our caucus held a somber, emotional, and very personal meeting, during which our Members shared their own lived experiences of racism and spoke about what we need to do next because the truth is, while speeches and protests are vital, they will never be enough.

We need greater accountability and transparency in police departments and reformed police practices so these events don't happen in the first place. We need to reform the criminal justice system that is still too short on justice and begin chipping away at the racial disparities that exist in healthcare, housing, education, and in the economy.

These issues will not be solved in a week or a month or in a year. Let's hope they can be solved in this decade. But I will be damned if we don't at least try to make some progress. Already, my colleagues Senators BOOKER, HARRIS, CARDIN, KLOBUCHAR, DUCKWORTH, SCHATZ, SMITH, and others are working with the Congressional Black Caucus in the House to develop legislation to address a number of issues related to police violence and racial justice. Senate Democrats will not wait to propose and push for bold, bold change.

Will our Republican colleagues join us? Leader MCCONNELL, commit to put a law enforcement reform bill on the floor of the Senate before July 4.