

good work of a committee working together to move those pieces of legislation through the committee process. It is not perfect, in my view, but I knew these were good policies that many Members across both sides of the aisle wanted to place a priority on.

Let's figure out how we can make something like that happen. I am proud of the fact that we can move good initiatives through this committee.

I will just remind you we have another good initiative that we are ready to go on.

THE JUSTICE ACT

Mrs. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I want to end my few moments on the floor with an acknowledgement of where we are going to be next week. It has been made clear that we are going to have an opportunity to bring up for discussion legislation that has been drafted by Senator TIM SCOTT from South Carolina, along with a group of fellow colleagues over here, focused on matters relating to policing reforms.

My hope—it is more than a hope; it is really a prayer. My prayer is that we will come to this floor next week as colleagues and as individuals who want to bring to bear good policy for a country at a time that is so desperate for leadership that is responsive, leadership that has demonstrated a willingness to listen to the raw emotion of what we have seen expressed across this country in the few weeks since the terrible death and killing of George Floyd but recognizing that it is far more than the horrible death of one individual. It is a history that in many parts of our country is raw and open and needs to be addressed.

My prayer is that we can come to this floor not here to debate through a partisan lens but here to debate those issues that are so important and so imperative for the American public to hear; that the response is not a Republican effort versus a Democratic effort, but that these are matters that we must address, whether it is how we ensure that there is full and fair accountability, whether it relates to safe policing practices, whether it is how we address the concerns with modern policing when there are issues before our law enforcement officers that span the scope of how we address mental health issues—those with addictions—and how we respond from a broader view and lens but do so with our hearts rather than trying to project through our political alignment.

I even hesitate to say because some would ask: Well, exactly what do you mean by that?

I guess what I am asking for us to do is to come here and debate honestly about where we are as a nation, and that comes to ensuring that when we speak of justice, that we speak of justice for all in a way that is inclusive, that is fair, that is equal, and that is compassionate; that we recognize that

the men and women who get up every morning or stay out late every evening to protect and defend, that we are there with them and for them as they serve us.

I am asking for us to come into our work next week with open hearts and open minds, having listened well. If we do that, I can only suspect that the outcome will be good.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

NOMINATION OBJECTION WITHDRAWAL

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I previously notified the Chamber of my objection to the nominations of Marshall Billingslea, of Virginia, to be Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security and Christopher C. Miller, of Virginia, to be Director of the National Counterterrorism Center, Office of the Director of National Intelligence. On June 12, 2020, I received two letters: one from the Department of State, which contained a copy of recent correspondence between the administration to the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, CIGIE, requesting that CIGIE investigate specific allegations into the conduct of the State Department Inspector General, State IG, Steve Linick, and another separate letter from the White House Counsel concerning the removal of Intelligence Community Inspector General, IC IG, Michael Atkinson. Without making comment regarding the veracity of the allegations made against Mr. Linick, I believe that these letters fulfill the President's requirement to provide Congress reasons for the removal of the IC IG and the State IG, as required by the Inspector General Reform Act. It is for this reason that I withdraw my objection to both Mr. Billingslea and Mr. Miller.

The letter from the White House Counsel regarding the removal of the IC IG repeats a previous letter from the White House which stated that the President had lost confidence in the IC IG. However, the White House Counsel enclosed with that letter a transcript of President Trump providing his reasons for removing Mr. Atkinson to the press and has informed me that those reasons represent the President's official explanation of Mr. Atkinson's removal to Congress. I believe that this transcript and its transmittal to Congress has fulfilled the statutory notice requirement of the Inspector General Reform Act. It is for this reason that I withdraw my objection to Mr. Miller.

Here follow my comments to the President, including my actions and ra-

tionale: although the Constitution gives the President the authority to manage executive branch personnel, Congress has made it clear by law that should the President fire an inspector general, there ought to be a good reason for it. No such reason was provided when the President informed Congress of the removal of Mr. Atkinson on April 3, 2020. Thus, in a bipartisan letter on April 8, 2020, my colleagues and I reminded the President of his requirement under the statute to provide reasons for removing an IG. On May 15, 2020, the President notified Congress of his intent to remove Mr. Linick. This notification also lacked reasons for the removal spurring my solo letter on May 18, 2020, again reminding the President of his requirement to provide reasons.

After a delay, and a personal call with the White House Counsel, I was promised a response to my letters that would fulfill the statutory notice requirement. On May 26, 2020, I received a response from the White House Counsel explaining the President's Constitutional removal authority, which I never questioned. However, the letter still contained no reason for the removals as required by law. This failure to comply with the statute prompted my objection to both Mr. Miller and Mr. Billingslea on June 4, 2020.

On June 6, 2020, I asked the White House to provide written reasons for the removals. We discussed several issues. I took this opportunity to talk to the White House and I told them that I needed reasons for the firing of IGs to be submitted in writing.

On June 12, 2020, I received the enclosed letter from the State Department which finally fulfills the executive branch's legal requirement to provide Congress reasons for an IG's removal with regard to Mr. Linick.

Here is my view on the firing of Mr. Linick. The State Department's correspondence with CIGIE provided four reasons for Mr. Linick's removal, all involving the investigation of the leak of information to a news reporter pertaining to an IG report, which the reporter claims to be based on information garnered from "two government sources involved in carrying out the investigation. The letter to CIGIE requests that they begin an investigation into Mr. Linick's alleged transgressions, including his: 1) "failure to formally refer to CIGIE . . . the investigation of [the] leak"; 2) "hand selection" of the Department of Defense OIG to conduct the leak investigation; 3) "non-compliance with State Department Office of Inspector General (OIG) email policies"; and 4) refusal to supply Department of State leadership with a copy or summary of the leak investigation report despite "repeated requests" from State Department leadership. These claims are as of yet unverified but the President has offered an additional briefing on the matter from State Department officials. I am in the process of scheduling

such a briefing and reviewing the additional relevant information.

After reviewing the provided rationale, I have several concerns. Chief among them is that CIGIE does not traditionally conduct investigations into agency or OIG leaks. It reviews allegations against individuals but not IG offices and generally lacks the funds and resources to conduct work outside of their narrow scope. As a matter of course however, IGs do traditionally check each other's work, and CIGIE often suggests that allegations against IGs or their offices be referred to peer IGs. This is done when crucial IG independence must be maintained but the appearance of conflicts of interest may arise. It would also not be uncharacteristic for an IG to safeguard the office's statutorily required independence by potentially refusing to provide internal information to its parent agency. In short, although it would make little sense for CIGIE to conduct the leak investigation in the manner desired by the State Department, it would not be outside the bounds of precedent for one office of inspector general to conduct an investigation into another.

Although I have not yet had the opportunity to verify the allegations regarding Mr. Linick, as I noted earlier, the President retains the constitutional authority to manage executive branch personnel. My objection to these nominees was designed to prompt compliance with the IG Reform Act, which the President has now done with regards to Mr. Linick. Therefore, I am withdrawing my objection to Mr. Billingslea.

On June 12, 2020, I received the enclosed letter from the White House Counsel which finally fulfills the executive branch's legal requirement to provide Congress reasons for an IG's removal with regard to Mr. Atkinson.

As it pertains to Mr. Atkinson: Even though the President satisfied the requirements of the law, I do not agree that the provided reasons merited Mr. Atkinson's removal. In the provided transcript the President states, "I thought [Atkinson] did a terrible job. Absolutely terrible . . . But ask him, 'Why didn't you go and see the [transcript of my phone call with the Ukrainian president]?' There was no rush. [Atkinson] said, 'Oh we'd have to rush it.'" I infer from this statement that the reason(s) that the President removed Mr. Atkinson was because of the speed with which he sought to bring the whistleblower information to Congress and/or his role generally in the impeachment process.

With respect to this objection concerning Mr. Atkinson's supposed haste, it is necessary to review the IC IG's responsibility under the Intelligence Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010. The act provides the IC IG only 14 days to determine if an "urgent concern" "appears credible" and transmit that information to the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, ODNI. No-

tably, the law also does not require that a full investigation of a whistleblower's allegations be completed before the information is provided to Congress. Reading such a requirement into the law could result in critical and relevant information not reaching the ODNI or Congress in a timely manner, and could pose a chilling effect on whistleblowers' willingness to report urgent concerns and other issues of waste, fraud, and abuse in the intelligence community. That being said, I understand and appreciate the President's irritation with this IG's action being a factor in the House of Representative's impeachment.

In those remarks, the President also said that "they give this whistleblower a status that he doesn't deserve And, frankly, somebody ought to sue [him]." To the extent that the President is referring to Mr. Atkinson's determination that the whistleblower allegation at issue amounted to an urgent concern under the law, there remains a significant difference of legal opinion on this matter. The President's position is supported by the Department of Justice Office of Legal Counsel, and Presidents routinely follow the legal determinations of that office. However, whether or not the whistleblower's allegation meets the legal definition of an "urgent concern" under the law, I obviously do not agree that person should be sued or otherwise retaliated against.

My objection to these nominees was designed to prompt compliance with the IG Reform Act, which the President has now done with regards to Mr. Atkinson. Therefore, I am withdrawing my objection to Mr. Miller.

Although some may want to believe that this is a new issue unique to this administration, it certainly is not. In July of 2009, then President Obama removed the Corporation for National and Community Service—CNCS—Inspector General, Gerald Walpin, from his post in a very similar manner and also did not provide reasons for removal. This began a bout of negotiations that resulted in not only the hold of several Presidential nominees but also a bicameral congressional investigation into the matter. In that case, I similarly pushed for compliance with the statute, held up a nominee to obtain information, and disagreed with the stated reasons for Mr. Walpin's removal. In the end, Mr. Walpin was never reinstated.

Given the misinterpretation of the statute by successive administrations from both political parties, it is apparent that Congress must clarify the statute to ensure inspectors general are able to continue operating without undue interference. So I am introducing a bipartisan bill today to accomplish just that.

(At the request of Mr. DURBIN, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

• Ms. ROSEN. Mr. Speaker, today I will not be present to vote on the con-

firmation of Justin Walker, vote 123, to be a judge on the District of Columbia Court of Appeals. Were I present, I would vote nay.●

JUNETEENTH

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, tomorrow, we will commemorate the 155th Juneteenth, the celebration of the end of chattel slavery in the United States. On June 19, 1865, Major General Gordon Granger and Union soldiers delivered the news of liberation to one of the last remaining confederate outposts in Galveston, TX. The Civil War had ended, and the last remaining enslaved Black Americans were free. General Gordon's decree would arrive over 2 years after President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation.

For millions of Black Americans, Juneteenth traditionally has been a celebration of this freedom; it is also a day of reflection and education on a history that we all must confront. There is much to inform us about our present times that we can learn from the story of Juneteenth. It is the story of America, the story of my home State of Maryland. Each year, I aim to share these lessons and resources with my constituents through my office and in recognizing the continued work we must do to elevate Black history and create a more tolerant society. This year, my office will close to commemorate the holiday and allow staff the time to reflect on its important historical lessons.

Juneteenth is a reminder that, even after the signing of Abraham Lincoln's seminal declaration, that even in a Nation whose founding documents should have enshrined liberty and justice for all of its inhabitants, freedom was a dream deferred for Black Americans. It is a reminder that liberation was hard fought by those who were denied it, including abolition leaders like Marylanders Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman, who then passed the torch to civil rights leaders and social movements past and present who are still fighting to realize equal justice under law. Equal justice under law is a promise the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, and the Emancipation Proclamation all made, but it remains elusive, so the struggle continues.

In this way, Juneteenth is a quintessential American holiday. The institution of chattel slavery is interwoven throughout American history and would become the architecture for unjust systems that still stand today. The Juneteenth liberation would precede over a century of continued oppression, oppression through stigmatization, policymaking, voter disenfranchisement, and Jim Crow segregation laws, which continued to widen the gaps of social, economic, and political achievement for Black Americans in our society. Acknowledging its sinister legacy and the efforts to chip away at it are critical to understanding how to dismantle it from its core.