

provide greater and more equitable prosperity to future generations.

Alongside the President-elect's deeply experienced national security team and his soon-to-be-announced health team, his economic team will ensure that the incoming Biden-Harris administration will hit the ground running.

Everyone knows that the Senate plays a pivotal role in confirming a new President's Cabinet. In the midst of this once-in-a-century crisis, it is imperative that the next administration can count on the Senate to confirm its Cabinet without delay, so hearings on President-Elect Biden's nominees should begin in January, immediately after the Georgia runoff elections.

Let me say that again. The Senate should begin hearings on President-Elect Biden's nominees in January, immediately after the Georgia Senate elections, so that key Cabinet officials can be confirmed on January 20 and soon thereafter, which is traditional for a new President. Senate committees held hearings for President Obama's nominees and President Trump's in early January, before the inauguration. Majority and minority staff should begin preparation for those hearings as President-Elect Biden names his Cabinet.

Now, President-Elect Biden's slate of intended nominees provides a stark contrast to the caliber of nominees advanced by the current Trump administration over the past 4 years. The early days of the Trump Presidency were defined by high-level appointments of individuals who were manifestly unqualified, plagued by ethical complaints, or swimming in conflicts of interest—sometimes all three.

At the time, Republicans in the Senate lined up to confirm President Trump's appointments, arguing that a President deserves his Cabinet and broad deference on his nominees. I would hope the same deference would be extended to President-Elect Biden's nominees, especially considering the obvious gulf in quality, experience, and ethics.

Already, however, the Republicans are twisting themselves into pretzels to explain their reflexive opposition to these outstanding selections. Neera Tanden, who would be the first woman of color to ever run the OMB, the Office of Management and Budget, is so eminently qualified that some on the Republican side—grasping at straws—have taken issue with comments made on Twitter criticizing the policy positions of Republicans in Congress.

Honestly, the hypocrisy is astounding. If Republicans are concerned about criticism on Twitter, their complaints are better directed at President Trump, who has made a hobby out of denigrating Republican Senators on Twitter.

I fully expect to see some crocodile tears spilled on the other side of the aisle over the President-elect's Cabinet nominees, but it will be very tough to

take those crocodile tears seriously. Our Republican colleagues are on the record supporting some of the least qualified, most unethical, and downright sycophantic Federal nominees in recent memory.

Many defended the conduct of previous OMB Director Russell Vought, who allowed foreign aid to be held up for political reasons, resulting in the President's impeachment. Right now, Republicans in Congress are looking the other way while President Trump pardons a man who pled guilty to the FBI.

So, again, it will be impossible to take these overblown complaints over President-Elect Biden's nominees very seriously. Given the urgent need to address COVID-19 and its economic fallout, the Senate should follow precedent and promptly hold hearings on President-Elect Biden's nominees in January, immediately after the Georgia elections, before inauguration.

The American people cannot afford to wait to have its government working at full force to keep them safe, defeat the virus, and get our economy back on track.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 5 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The Democratic leader.

AGENT ORANGE

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, before I yielded the floor, I talked about Agent Orange, maybe before he had come on the floor, and it would be outrageous—the Senator from Montana has done great work helping our veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange get the healthcare they need and deserve, and I hope that our Republican colleagues will relent and allow those provisions to stay in the NDAA bill, and I compliment him on the work he has done.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, I thank the minority leader. I would just say that the presumptive conditions that the fighting men and women were exposed to in Vietnam are real, and the fact of the matter is these folks are getting old enough now that these conditions are putting them in a world of

hurt healthwise. It is the right thing to do to support our Vietnam veterans when it comes to the presumptive conditions that were caused by Agent Orange, and it needs to be in the NDAA.

TRIBUTE TO TRECIA MCEVOY

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, as we come here this week, back to Washington, DC, to deal with next year's funding package and hopefully a COVID package, I want to step back for a second and talk about really what is the most important thing in this body, and that is relationships.

Now, as a U.S. Senator, we have relationships with the people who elect us and for whom we work. Some of those relationships are outstanding; some may be not so outstanding. We also have relationships with the people who work for us, and, once again, some of those relationships are outstanding; some of them could use a little work.

Today, I get to talk about somebody who is retiring from my office who has had an outstanding relationship with everybody in my office, which is a feat that not a lot of folks are able to accomplish. But she is retiring. She is my scheduler.

Her name is Trecia Bickford McEvoy. I would just say that Trecia is not here today. Hopefully, she is watching on C-SPAN. The reason she is not here is because of COVID. My wife is not here today, and my wife dearly wanted to be here today to hear this speech in person. She is not here greatly in part because of COVID.

But the bottom line is, when it comes to Trecia McEvoy—and any Senator knows this—the most difficult job in any office in the U.S. Senate is the person who schedules the Senator's time. It is tough enough to be able to get to the committee meetings on time and be able to deal with the floor schedule and make sure you are meeting with constituents all in a timely order, not holding anybody up. But in my particular case, it is even more difficult because, as the folks in this body know, I still farm. So getting back to Big Sandy, MT, to that farm 12 miles west, to be able to do the things that I need to do, whether it is planting, whether it is harvesting, whatever it is, in a timely manner is also really important.

Not only did Trecia have to deal with my schedule here in the Senate, she had to deal with a very, very uncertain schedule on the farm. Let me give an example. I may be peeling out of here on a Thursday night with full intentions to plant some peas the next day. When I call my wife Sharla and say "What is the weather like?" she will say "It is raining," to which I call back Trecia and say "Trecia, you have to schedule for me for work in the State because I can't do any farming" to which she would go to work and over the next 12 hours, starting at about 4 or 5 in the afternoon, would help schedule, working with my State schedule