

leader there. They are two of our most populous counties in the State of Mississippi, and he stands head and shoulders above the crowd in both of those.

He has been president of the Harrison County Bar Association and holds memberships in the American Inns of Court, the Federal Bar Association, Fifth Circuit Bar Association, and the Federalist Society.

Taylor and his wife Jessica have three children: Mollie, age 10; Taylor, age 7; and Brantley Rose, born on the 2nd day of this month.

He has his hands full. I think he will be able to balance being a dad as well as a district judge. He has outstanding qualifications in the academic field, the judicial field, and his personal qualifications are absolutely out of this world. I am confident he will serve the Southern District of Mississippi and our country well if confirmed.

We will vote on cloture in a few moments. Again, I am sincerely hoping and believe we will—based on conversations—have a bipartisan vote, and I urge my colleagues to join me in voting yes on the confirmation of Taylor McNeel.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

PRESIDENTIAL TRANSITION

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I see nobody within 15 or 20 feet of me, so I will take the mask off, and I appreciate the fact the distinguished Presiding Officer recognized who it was even with the mask.

I have a couple of things that concern me. I was going through the history and looking at transitions between Presidents. I was struck by—even Presidents who did not like their successor—how hard they worked to make sure that everything was done properly for the good of the country. No matter how they might feel about themselves personally, they set the country first and foremost. I contrast that with what is happening now.

Former Vice President, former U.S. Senator—I served with him—Joe Biden, got the most votes of any Democratic nominee for President in the history of this country—millions more than what President Trump got. He has an insurmountable lead in certified electoral votes. Yet the President, for weeks, refused even to carry out the law that we all voted for—Republicans and Democrats alike—to provide for transition whenever there is a transition, a law that was used quickly when President Trump was elected. Even though Hillary Clinton had millions more votes than he did, she conceded the election, and within a day, the transition began.

The idea is, whoever is President must know what is going on. Certainly, the distinguished Presiding Officer, like all of us, has access to and gets intelligence briefings on what is happening around the world. I think it discloses nothing to say we live in per-

ilous times, and there are decisions any President must make, even if it is 5 minutes after they are inaugurated, as was the potential when President Obama was inaugurated the first time. He actually had talking points to alert people to clear the malls in case there was an attack.

Instead, today is only the first day that President-Elect Biden is getting the Presidential briefing. Vice President-Elect KAMALA HARRIS, of course, has the advantage as a member of the Senate Intelligence Committee to have a lot of that material anyway, but now they both do.

But we look so foolish in the eyes of the rest of the world. We lecture dictatorships when they have rigged an election so they can stay. We lecture them for doing that. We lecture those people who refuse to give up their office. Yet now they see the United States, the leading democratic country in the world, the country that always espouses democracy, saying: Well, we are not going to follow our Constitution. We are not going to follow our laws. We will allow a lot of tweets from the incumbent, but we are not going to follow our law.

What kind of example is that?

Then the President does even worse by saying: Well, I am getting these calls from all these world leaders saying to stick it out. But, of course, when asked “Well, who were they?” suddenly he can’t seem to remember who it was who called—if there were any such calls; I suspect there weren’t.

Let’s stop the charade. Let’s make more of an effort to have a smooth transition. There are enough things that face this country. We should not have, for the first time in our history, this kind of foolishness.

I applaud those few members of the Republican Party who have been honest enough to say: It is over. We know it is over.

I think when you go back in history, when Richard Nixon faced impeachment and ultimate conviction here in the Senate, some of the most respected Republican Senators went down to see him quietly—people like Hugh Scott, the Republican leader, whom I got to know well, and Barry Goldwater, “Mr. Conservative,” whom I got to know well. They went down—not with any happiness in doing this, as one of them told me subsequently there was actually sorrow in their hearts—to tell the President he had to leave; the time had come.

The President did, and the Republicans and Democrats came together to help install the next President, Jerry Ford, and the next Vice President, Nelson Rockefeller. The two of them became the first President and Vice President never to have been elected. Jerry Ford and Nelson Rockefeller were the first President and Vice President never to be elected but to be appointed. That was about the time I came to the Senate.

I remember hearing Republicans and Democrats alike saying: We might not

like to say what happened, but we knew the government had to keep going, and we had to show credibility to the rest of the world. So long as we pretend that we have a Presidency by tweet, we don’t show that integrity to the rest of the world.

I was there for the inauguration of President Trump. Even though I had a different candidate and voted for her, Secretary and former Senator Hillary Clinton, I was there—as was Secretary Clinton and her husband, former President Clinton, and outgoing President Obama and outgoing Vice President Biden—to show the world that we have continuity. Even though there is a vast difference of opinion, we have continuity.

That is not the image we are showing now. With everything that is happening, whether it is in Iran or, economically, with Brexit and the United Kingdom or a COVID epidemic around the world, we, the United States of America, should show unity, at least under our Constitution.

Of course, Republicans should be supporting Republicans and, of course, Democrats should be supporting Democrats. But the one thing we should all be supportive of is our Constitution and our laws.

We stand down there—the proudest moments of my life were standing down here and taking my oath to uphold the Constitution as United States Senator, just as I did when I became President pro tempore. I did it to uphold the Constitution of the United States, not the Constitution of the Democratic Party, not the Constitution of the Republican Party, but the Constitution of the United States of America.

Let’s get on with the transition. Let’s make America strong again. Let’s do what is necessary to be done to fight this COVID epidemic.

In that regard, we have two matters that should be the most important matters before us. One is getting an omnibus because, after all, in a couple of weeks, funding for the United States of America will run out, and we don’t want to have one of those foolish shutdowns that we had before that cost the taxpayers billions and billions of dollars. Only four of us—Senator SHELBY and myself and our counterparts in the House just down the hall—met in my office and worked out a bipartisan resolution and passed the spending bill so that we could put the government back in order. Ironically, it was exactly what we had offered weeks before. For some reason the White House didn’t want to accept it, and billions of dollars of taxpayers’ money were lost.

Now we have a life-or-death issue that goes beyond even the spending, and that is COVID. The House of Representatives, back in June, I believe it was, passed the Heroes Act to have money, equipment, and so forth for those who are suffering because of the COVID epidemic, like the small stores, inns, restaurants, and so forth in my

State, to say nothing about our hospitals that are overwhelmed.

We had money in there. The Republican leader refused to even bring the bill up for a vote. I can't say why. The Republicans are in the majority. Bring it up. Have four or five amendments on both sides. Have four or five Republican amendments and four or five Democratic amendments. Vote them up or down. What are we afraid of? Why would we refuse to vote? If the Republican leader doesn't like the bill, instead of blocking it and not even having a vote on it, vote it up or down. The Republicans are in the majority. They could vote down any aid for the States that are suffering with COVID, but vote it up or down.

I have heard some Senators say: But they are nervous. Whichever way they vote, it might be uncomfortable back home. It might not be politically good for them back home.

Balderdash. The fact is that we were sent here to vote. I have voted more than any Senator in the history of this country, save one. I have cast well over 16,000 votes. If people were to go back to those votes and ask: "What were you thinking on this vote in 1978 or 1986 or 1995," I would probably look at it and say, "Hmm. In retrospect, I think I probably screwed up." Yet I was willing to vote. I was willing to vote.

When I was the key vote in the Armed Services Committee to stop the war in Vietnam, I knew that our State's largest newspaper would attack me mercilessly, and it did for months after that. It would be hard today to find anybody who would be in favor of continuing that war in Vietnam, but we had five votes in a row in the Armed Services Committee, and each one failed by one vote. I was its newest member, but I was there to vote, which is what we have to do.

I look at some of my friends on the Republican side who have joined me on some very tough votes. I don't want to embarrass the senior Senator from Texas, but he is on the floor. With regard to the Freedom of Information Act, we stood up against both Republicans and Democrats and said: No, we are standing up for the people of America, and we are going to have votes on this so they can see what their government is doing. That is what we have to go back to. We have to go back to the time when we could do that.

What I would urge of the Republican leadership is to bring up a COVID bill—a real COVID bill. Have a few amendments on both sides. Vote them up or down. If you don't like an amendment somebody has, vote against it. If you like it, vote for it. Let the American people at least have some hope that we are doing something for them.

Too many businesses are going out of business. Too many families don't know what they are going to do when the schools close. Too many small hospitals, especially in rural areas, wonder what they are going to do as COVID sweeps through. Let's give them some

hope. Let's say to the people: No, you are not going to be kicked out of your home. No, you are not going to be living in your car. We will give you money to get through this, knowing that the economy can be much stronger afterward if you do. Certainly, it is going to be much stronger for those in our labor force if they are still in their homes, as the jobs open back up, than if they are homeless.

So let's do that. Let's bring it up and vote. Senator SHELBY and I have worked very, very hard on bipartisan legislation for the omnibus. We probably have, maybe, 95 to 98 percent of it agreed on. Bring it up. Then, on the 2 or 3 or 4 percent, bring votes up. Vote it up or vote it down. After all, the Republicans are in the majority. If they don't like it, vote it down, but let's get the vast bulk of it through, which is something that both Republicans and Democrats have worked together on. My staff has worked together with the Republicans' staff, and we have something we can do there. So vote it up or vote it down. Let's just vote on it.

Then let's let people leave here. Let our staffs, the people who work in the hallway, and the people who are here on the floor go where it is safe. I am glad to see the distinguished Presiding Officer has gotten over his own bout of COVID. He and everybody else here who has suffered from it have been in my prayers, but there are millions of others who are suffering from it, and in the highest number we have ever had, they are dying from it.

Let's get together. Let's do what the American people want. Let's do what we were elected to do. Let's not be afraid to vote. Don't be afraid to vote. Certainly, I may have thought long and hard about some of those 16,000 votes I have cast, but I have never been afraid to vote. I have never been afraid to vote.

I see my colleague and friend waiting for the chance to speak, so I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCOTT of Florida). The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, first, while he is still on the floor, let me say that I agree with the senior Senator from Vermont. If you don't want to vote, you probably ought to look for another line of work. Congress is a bad place to come if you don't want to actually vote and be on record.

FOREIGN ACTORS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, as America waits for the results of the 2020 election to be certified in a couple of weeks, former Vice President Joe Biden has begun to announce his picks for his Cabinet and other high-ranking positions.

Some of these nominees have close ties to investment and other consulting firms whose clients are largely unknown or who may be even the subjects of nondisclosure agreements. The

truth is that these individuals could be working on behalf of a "feel good" non-profit, a malicious foreign actor, or a large company with business before the government. The truth of the matter is, we have simply no idea what kind of business or financial relationships these individuals have with foreign powers that could influence their actions as high-ranking government officials. This goes way beyond compliance with the Foreign Agents Registration Act. This is an ethical issue. It is a conflict-of-interest issue, and Americans deserve to know if these nominees have connections or relationships that could cloud their judgment on behalf of the American people if they are confirmed.

When it comes to the business dealings of those who could serve in high-ranking government positions, full transparency is the only option. So I encourage each of these individuals, if nominated, to take an open-book approach throughout the hearings and confirmation processes. In fact, I will make a pledge here today that I will not support any nominee who doesn't provide full transparency into his work on behalf of a foreign government. I will not do it. The American people deserve to know if these or any future nominees are beholden to anything other than our national interest.

Just to make the point that this is not some imaginary or hypothetical problem, let me refer to an article that was written today in the Associated Press News, entitled: "'Mercenary' donor sold access for millions in foreign money." This is a story of a so-called elite political fundraiser, Imaad Zuberi, who, maybe not surprisingly, raised a lot of money for Hillary Clinton and President Barack Obama and who also became the top donor to the Trump Presidential Inaugural Committee. In other words, he wasn't particularly partisan. He just wanted to be close to power and be able to influence it.

Prosecutors who have now prosecuted him for a variety of violations of campaign finance laws and foreign lobbying laws have called him a mercenary political donor. His foreign entanglements were quite extensive. He lobbied as an unregistered foreign agent for at least half a dozen countries and officials, including a Ukrainian oligarch who was close to Russian President Vladimir Putin. He lobbied for countries like Turkey and Sri Lanka, among others. As I said, it really doesn't make a difference so much which country. It was the fact that he was lobbying in an undisclosed fashion, raising money for political candidates, and violating campaign finance laws for which he has now pled guilty and will be awaiting sentencing after the first of the year.

We spent a lot of the last 4 years—and, certainly, as a member of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, we spent about 3½ years—investigating Russian interference with the 2016 election. Yet, as this story makes clear,