

Zuberi's story shows there are far easier ways to bend American foreign policy than by using sophisticated hacking tools or well-funded troll farms. In other words, you can do it the way he has done it, which is by violating our foreign agent registration laws, representing foreign governments and foreign interests, and hiring lobbyists and cutting out donors in a way that funnels foreign money into the American political process—unbeknownst to people like us unless it is disclosed.

Between 1966 and 2015, the Department of Justice brought just seven criminal cases for violating the law relating to registering as a foreign lobbyist, according to a 2016 inspector general's report. So this is a serious topic.

The incoming chairman of the Committee on the Judiciary, Senator GRASSLEY, and the current ranking member, Senator FEINSTEIN, and I have a bipartisan bill to reform the Foreign Agents Registration Act, but this is going to be front and center in the confirmation process for any nominee by the incoming administration, and I just think it is fair to place everybody on fair notice that full transparency is the only option.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, on another matter, the Senate has, of course, returned for a last end-of-the-year legislative dash, and we have a lot of work to do before we cross the finish line.

As we know, government funding will expire in less than 2 weeks, and we have to reach an agreement, as the senior Senator from Vermont mentioned, before the December 11 deadline of the current continuing resolution. With millions of Americans already facing economic uncertainty, a government shutdown is, surely, not an option.

We need to pass the National Defense Authorization Act to support America's brave servicemembers and ensure that our military leaders have the ability to plan and operate with certainty and provide peace through American strength. Also, as we move into the winter months, which the experts have told us will present new challenges in our war against the COVID-19 virus, it is time to cut the partisanship and deliver another round of relief to the American people.

It is worth recounting—because people have short memories, apparently, in Washington, DC—that, over the last several months, our Democratic colleagues have consistently talked about the need to bolster our support in the fight against COVID-19. Yet, despite the repeated rhetoric and calls to action, they have unapologetically stood in the way of each and every attempt to make real progress.

This summer, we proposed something called the HEALS Act—as the Presiding Officer knows, for he was instrumental in that work—as a starting

point for negotiations on a new relief package. It was a starting place, a place to begin bipartisan negotiations in the hope of crafting a package that could get the requisite number of votes. Unfortunately, before the election, our Democratic colleagues had simply no interest in amending the bill or trying to find any kind of common ground. I think they thought it was to their political advantage for the American people to be experiencing the anxiety and the pain before the election. I can't imagine holding them hostage, but that is what appeared, to me, to be the case.

Instead of trying to find common ground—in particular, the Speaker made the amazing statement that nothing was better than something when it came to COVID-19 relief, which is just the opposite of what I have always believed—she demeaned the bill of half a trillion dollars in spending as “pathetic.” The minority leader called it “unworkable,” but then they didn't lift a finger to try to get anything done.

So the next month we took another shot. We attempted to narrow the scope of negotiations to the most urgent matters—things like continuing Federal unemployment benefits, which expired at the end of July. This is last July. This time our Democratic colleagues rejected what they called a “piecemeal” approach.

Well, never mind the fact that the House returned to Washington to help pass a bill that supported the U.S. Postal Service. We all believe in supporting the Postal Service, but apparently they thought that piecemeal bill was acceptable as long as it was a Democratic-authored bill and didn't provide any additional relief to the American people.

Well, being unsuccessful those first two times, we tried again a third time. So in September the majority leader tried to bring a bill to the floor to provide \$500 billion for our shared bipartisan priorities. There weren't any real differences in what was in the bill. The only difference was that our Democratic colleagues wanted to spend multiples of that for unrelated activities. We wanted to concentrate the effort on helping small businesses keep their employees on payroll, giving schools the resources they needed to keep their students and teachers safe, strengthening testing nationwide, and investing in the continued success of Operation Warp Speed, which is going to deliver an FDA-approved vaccine before the end of the year—not just one, maybe as many as two or three, and more, perhaps, to come.

Anyone who has spent time watching C-SPAN over the last several months has heard both Republicans and Democrats talk about the importance of every single one of these things, but when legislation that includes all of these priorities came up for an initial vote, our Democratic colleagues wouldn't even allow us to get on the

bill. In other words, here in the Senate you have to vote to get on the bill before you can then offer amendments and try to make it better.

So they killed it. Without batting an eye, our Democratic colleagues voted in lockstep to block the bill and unanimously oppose legislation that would have invested an additional half-trillion dollars in our fight against COVID-19.

When the majority leader tried to bring the bill to the floor again in October, we saw exactly the same thing. It was the same bad movie all over again. Our Democratic colleagues refused to let us even debate, much less to amend, the bill.

It is not just these targeted packages that have been blocked by our Democratic colleagues. They stood in the way of our commonsense proposals, like the one from the now-former Senator from Arizona, Senator MCSALLY, which would have extended unemployment benefits for 1 week while we negotiated a larger compromise.

Our friends on the other side of the aisle have repeatedly said that Congress needs to act, but the reality is their own actions have prevented us from doing so.

Month after month, they have demonstrated it is either the House's multitrillion-dollar, leftwing-policy grab-bag wish list or nothing. They have consistently told the American people: It is our way or the highway. You don't get an extension of unemployment insurance unless we get tax breaks for blue-State millionaires and billionaires. You don't get vaccine funding unless we get diversity studies on the marijuana industry. You don't get funding for schools unless we get permanent changes to hijack and take over our election laws and run them out of Washington, DC.

Well, even rank-and-file Democrats have now understood and criticized this sort of bogus approach to legislating. It has been the same song and dance month after month—fiery speeches, press conferences, tweets, and letters calling for action. But each time our Democratic colleagues have been given an opportunity to actually do something—to do more than spout off some meaningless, vapid rhetoric at the nearest microphone—they have simply stood in the way.

The fact of the matter is our Democratic colleagues have blocked more COVID relief bills than they have passed. Yet they continue to feign outrage over Congress's failure to pass a bill—we heard it again here today—as though they aren't the ones responsible for the impasse.

Our jobs here in the Senate aren't simply to vote against imperfect bills. If that were the case, no bill would ever pass, because none of them is perfect. But this body is built on making imperfect legislation better through a debate-and-amendment process—two processes we haven't seen much at work this year.

So the bottom line is Congress needs to act. The American people want Democrats and Republicans to come to an agreement on the things our country actually needs to make it through this crisis.

It won't be the last piece of legislation we pass, but we do need to do this next step, and we need to do it soon—as soon as possible.

It is time for our Democratic colleagues to realize the election is over and the only real people being hurt by their intransigence are the people they represent in their various States.

So it is time to start getting back to work for all the American people on a bipartisan piece of legislation and to quit the partisan games. I can't say it any more directly than that.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, this week, as we return to DC, we are going to resume consideration of the 2021 National Defense Authorization Act. Around DC we call it the NDAA. And before I get into discussing some of my priorities in this legislation, I want to encourage each and every one of my colleagues to carefully consider why we go through the lengthy process of drafting and reconciling this authorization. And we do this every single year.

The easy answer, of course, is that we have a duty to provide for our common defense and that of our allies and partners. But every year the media devotes most of their attention to how much money we have agreed to spend on the tools of war—the Chinook helicopters, the Virginia-class submarines, and the Reapers. They want to know about the flashy hardware and end up ignoring the people who are in the driver's seat.

Thousands of service men and women call Tennessee home, and when I accepted the role of Senator, I took on a special responsibility to look after and to take care of each and every one of them.

Their decision to serve came with necessary and serious lifestyle changes, both for themselves and for their families. Anyone who knows a servicemember knows that their lives are not their own. They go where they are told to go. They do the job they are told to do. They do it without hesitation because they have accepted that serving their country is more important than the autonomy they sacrificed when they put on that uniform and took their oath.

"Sacrifice" is the key word here because it applies not only to the servicemember, but it also applies to their family. This is why we spend so much time focusing on programs that make their lives as seamless as possible.

For example, this year, I continued work on military spouse license portability to make it easier for spouses who wish to continue working in their chosen field after they have changed locations, moved from one State to another, because they were told this was going to be their new duty station. We hope these spouses are able to continue their careers, to be fulfilled in their jobs and responsibilities. Last year, we established a pilot program for licensure reciprocity, and this year, we worked to increase funding for this very important program.

With my remaining time, I want to focus on our special operations community, especially the 5th Special Forces Group and the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment. They each call Fort Campbell their home.

For those who serve in these elite units, uncommon bravery is an everyday occurrence. They go to some of the worst places on the face of the Earth, to be surrounded by the most dangerous people alive, to do work that no one can ever know about and at a higher occupational tempo than any other aspect of our forces. Their operational tempo is unbelievable. The physical, spiritual, and psychological toll of that work and the stigma attached to it by those who do not understand its importance cannot be overstated. It is not a unique burden, but it is an especially heavy burden.

U.S. Special Operations Command knows this and has made taking care of the people behind this mission a priority. They created the Preservation of the Force and Families Program to support these warriors and their families, but, like any program of this nature, it requires continuous innovation and evolution to stay effective.

This year's Senate-passed NDAA reaffirms the importance of this initiative to both servicemembers and their families and improves human, psychological, spiritual, and social performance programs. It also requires a deeper study on new opportunities for special and incentive pay parity in order to increase retention of our valuable special operators.

This is only one aspect of an expansive piece of legislation, but it provides a useful reminder that every dollar—every single taxpayer dollar that we spend to defend the cause of freedom is gone to waste if we ignore the unique needs of the people fighting our battles for us. We have to put the emphasis on this human capital—on the individual, on their family.

This is one of those moments where it would be in everyone's best interest and our Nation's best interest to avoid playing politics with a very important policy—protecting these men and women in uniform, providing for the

common defense, providing the tools, the training, and the services they need in order to be ready to deploy, in order to take care of their families, in order to treat their wounds when they return—to care for the whole of the soldier.

At the risk of sounding like a broken record, delay isn't an inconvenience when it comes to the NDAA. It is not a bump in the road. When it comes to our Nation's defense spending, delay is dangerous. It is dangerous for our national defense, it is dangerous for the allies and the partners who depend on us, and it is dangerous for our troops and their families. It is my hope that we will be able to proceed with consideration of the final 2021 NDAA with that above all else at the forefront of our minds.

I yield the floor.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BOOZMAN). Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Taylor B. McNeel, of Mississippi, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of Mississippi.

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

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

Mr. SHELBY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent now that the mandatory quorum call be waived.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Taylor B. McNeel, of Mississippi, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of Mississippi.

Mitch McConnell, Mike Crapo, Tom Cotton, David Perdue, Mike Rounds, Pat Roberts, Cindy Hyde-Smith, Kevin Cramer, Lindsey Graham, Thom Tillis, Tim Scott, James E. Risch, Michael B. Enzi, John Cornyn, Roger F. Wicker, John Thune, John Boozman.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.