

that alleged environmental violations will be investigated and remedied in a timely manner. These new tools and resources will help ensure that environmental protections are not just words on a piece of paper but policies that will actually be put into practice and consistently maintained well into the future.

As chairman of both the Environment and Public Works Committee and the Finance Subcommittee on International Trade, I look forward to working with my colleagues and with Katherine Tai and her team to build on the progress that was made in the USMCA.

Another immense trade challenge that we face now is to effectively counter China's unfair trade practices and its expanding influence in international trade. Since joining the World Trade Organization, the WTO, in 2001, China has proven to be a bad actor time and again. I believe that, working with our allies in the Pacific Rim in a spirit similar to the Trans-Pacific Partnership, we can more effectively ensure that China adheres to its trade commitments with us and with the rest of the world.

Katherine has the expertise to help make that happen. Her prior experience as U.S. Trade Rep's Chief Counsel for China Trade Enforcement, where she led efforts to hold China accountable at the WTO for its unfair trade practices, is going to prove to be a tremendous asset for our Nation.

We would be lucky to have Katherine Tai, a committed public servant, represent our Nation on the world stage. As a daughter of immigrants and the first woman of color to be nominated to serve as U.S. Trade Rep, Katherine often cites her parents, also both public servants, as her inspiration.

In her testimony to the Finance Committee that I serve on, Katherine said—I want to quote her. Here is what she said. Speaking of her parents, she said:

I am proud of their service to the nation that welcomed them. And I am proud to live in a country where, in just one generation, their daughter could grow up to represent the United States and our interests around the globe.

Those are her words.

I, too, am proud to serve in a country where this is possible.

Simply put, Katherine has decades of experience in trade, years of experience working in trade in a bipartisan fashion, and a keen understanding of the role Congress can play alongside the administration to implement successful trade policies.

As the world grapples with the greatest economic downturn since the Great Depression, it is more important now than ever to have a leader at the U.S. Trade Rep's Office who will work with Congress to advance a trade agenda that uplifts American workers in every corner of our country, spurs domestic manufacturing, and improves environmental and labor standards throughout the world.

Given Katherine's track record and many years of experience working across the aisle in Congress, I am confident that she has the broad support necessary to be a highly skilled and effective U.S. Trade Representative as she takes on the many trade challenges that we face, and I invite my colleagues to join me in voting to confirm Katherine Tai to serve as our next Trade Representative.

If I could, do I have a few more minutes to speak?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. You do.

Mr. CARPER. Madam President, my legislative director is a woman named Xiao. Lucy is her first name, Lucy Xiao. She said to me several months ago, after the election—Joe Biden was elected—she said: You know, we were working on the USMCA last year. We worked with a woman who was a very senior member of the House Ways and Means Committee staff to help make sure the environmental provisions in the law are not only strong but enforceable.

She said: The woman we worked with is a top staff person on the House Ways and Means Committee. Her name is Katherine Tai.

Lucy said to me: I think that Katherine Tai might make a good U.S. Trade Rep and may make a very interesting human story as well.

I have huge respect for Lucy's judgment, and I turned around and I called on the phone the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, an old colleague from my days in the House, RICHARD NEAL.

I said: RICHARD, does the name "Katherine Tai" mean anything to you?

He said: Oh, yes. She is a great member of my staff.

I said: She has been suggested as someone who might serve as the U.S. Trade Rep. What do you think?

He said: She would be excellent. She would be excellent.

The next call I made was to Ted Kaufman, former U.S. Senator, former chief of staff to Joe Biden for many years, and the interim Senator in this body for 2 years after Joe was elected Vice President. I called former Senator Kaufman, who was in charge of the transition for the Biden team, and I said: Ted, I think I have a good name for Trade Rep.

I explained who Katherine Tai was and her history and her work experience and what Chairman RICHARD NEAL said about her.

I said: She might be a keeper.

A week later, he called me and he said: We are getting all kinds of great comments about Katherine Tai.

He said: You know, I think you don't always have the best judgment, TOM CARPER, but I think in this case, maybe you are like a blind squirrel that occasionally finds a nugget.

And I think maybe in this case, I have, with the strong support and help of Lucy.

So that is the story. That is my Katherine Tai story. She is a keeper,

and we are lucky to have her. She will succeed if confirmed. She will succeed Robert Lighthizer and Michael Froman, our immediate past two Trade Reps. Those are big shoes to fill, but she is very well prepared to fill them.

With that, 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. COTTON. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

NOMINATION OF XAVIER BECERRA

Mr. COTTON. Madam President, the Senate is considering the nomination of California Attorney General Xavier Becerra to be Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services. Without question, the Senate should reject this nomination.

In the midst of this pandemic, America deserves a Health Secretary who is solely—solely focused on getting shots in arms, getting kids back to school, and getting parents back to work. But that is not Mr. Becerra.

Over his long career in politics, his primary passion has been ramming through a radical, far-left agenda and using the power of his office to persecute his political enemies.

Mr. Becerra would be in charge of administering the Nation's health programs, but he has virtually no experience or expertise in healthcare. His only experience responding to the pandemic, as far as I can tell, has been his enforcement of California's excessive and traumatizing lockdowns over the last year.

Mr. Becerra has been California's top cop, overseeing the most draconian and unconstitutional series of lockdowns anywhere in our country. He has shuttered churches while liquor stores and marijuana dispensaries remain open. He has destroyed small, family-owned businesses while enriching massive corporations.

In the false name of public health, he has rigorously enforced unscientific and unproductive measures that have ruined the lives of Californians. Today, California's unemployment rate stands at 9 percent—45 percent higher than the national average, nearly two times higher than our unemployment rate in Arkansas. That is the result of bad policy. And jobless Californians have Xavier Becerra and Gavin Newsom to thank for their struggles.

If Mr. Becerra's record as attorney general is any indication, every American should be alarmed by how this nominee would fight the pandemic—not with science, compassion, or common sense but with crushing political force. Few Americans believe that California's lockdown commissar deserves a promotion. Unfortunately, the Senate may just give him one.

Mr. Becerra is also a vocal advocate for the socialist takeover of healthcare

known euphemistically as Medicare for All. He supports destroying union healthcare plans, crushing Medicare Advantage, and ultimately taking away your health insurance on the job, which covers, I would add, 158 million Americans. This disastrous boondoggle would cost \$34 trillion and would inevitably result in the rationing of care, hurting senior citizens most of all. Medicare for All would, in reality, result in Medicare for None.

Last year, President Biden acknowledged that Medicare for All would yield massive tax hikes for middle-class families. Yet Joe Biden selected a supporter of this disastrous Medicare for All plan to be his top Cabinet official on healthcare.

And, of course, Mr. Becerra wouldn't be a Biden administration nominee if he didn't also support open borders. But he has gone further on open borders than even most of the other Biden administration officials, saying out loud what so many Democrats silently believe. He has openly argued for the decriminalization of illegal immigration. He has even stated with a straight face that illegal immigration does absolutely no harm at all, directly or indirectly, to American citizens. If Mr. Becerra really believes that, he is hopelessly naive and needs to get out a little more.

He can start by talking to the millions of Americans who are out of work or whose wages have stagnated thanks to competition from illegal aliens. He could also visit the graves of thousands of Americans killed by Mexican drugs and terrorized by gangs like MS-13. If confirmed, Mr. Becerra would oversee our Nation's response to the drug crisis and the maintenance of many migrant detention facilities. His radical open borders advocacy would make matters worse on both fronts. It would also fuel the ever-growing surge of unvetted, untested, and unvaccinated illegal aliens into our Nation, spreading the coronavirus in our communities just as it looks like we are about to turn the corner on this pandemic.

Finally, Mr. Becerra holds opinions on abortion that are unacceptable, unjust, and far outside the mainstream. As a Member of Congress, he voted in favor of partial-birth abortion—a disturbing and deadly procedure performed in the very last stages of pregnancy. As California's attorney general, he tried to destroy anyone who opposed his extreme position on this issue. He brought 15 felony charges against pro-life, undercover journalists who exposed Planned Parenthood's illegal and disgusting sale of baby body parts—a move that even the liberal Los Angeles Times called “disturbingly aggressive.” He defended an unconstitutional law that would have forced pro-life crisis pregnancy centers to advertise for abortions, the very thing it is their mission to oppose—something that the U.S. Supreme Court called a “serious threat” to freedom of speech.

He even sued to force an order of nuns, the Little Sisters of the Poor, to

purchase healthcare coverage that violated their sincerely held religious beliefs. And when he was asked about all of this in the Senate, like any bully, he tried to cover it up, denying that he sued the Little Sisters at all. If he will sue the Little Sisters, then what will he do to you and your family?

A few of my colleagues have indicated that they will vote for Mr. Becerra, despite disagreeing with these radical views. Perhaps they think those are just his personal beliefs, that he won't practice what he preaches. Perhaps they think he won't undermine pro-life protections like the Hyde Amendment and use his office to persecute Catholic nuns. I would ask those colleagues to look at Mr. Becerra's record, not the words he utters to get their vote, and then to reconsider their support because any honest assessment will show that Xavier Becerra is a partisan cultural warrior who has consistently abused his office to punish his enemies and to enact far-left policies in Congress and in California.

If the Senate confirms his nomination, they will be empowering Mr. Becerra to bring California's lockdowns, lawsuits, and liberal policies to all of our 50 States, and that would be a disaster for our country.

I will close with a simple request for President Biden, who campaigned on unity and ending a terrible pandemic: Merely do what you said you would do. Send us a nominee who will unify the country and bring consensus, not one who will scrape by on the slimmest of majorities. Send us a nominee who is actually a healthcare expert, and the Senate will gladly consider them. Xavier Becerra is not that nominee, and the Senate should reject his nomination resoundingly.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MURPHY). Without objection, it is so ordered.

ELECTION SECURITY

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, about 1 year ago today, Congress was in the midst of a debate about the most effective way to respond to COVID-19. On a call with his colleagues, the House majority whip, Mr. CLYBURN, reportedly laid out his vision about how his caucus in the House should proceed. He said, it is reported: This is a tremendous opportunity to restructure things to fit our vision.

For American families, this pandemic has been an unmistakable tragedy, one characterized by lost lives and lost livelihoods, but, apparently, for some, it is viewed as a tremendous opportunity.

The partisan \$1.9 trillion bill that was signed into law last week is proof

that, apparently, the Democrats in Congress and in the White House agree. After all, this legislation includes a long list of non-COVID-related priorities, again, completely unrelated to the crisis at hand: blank checks for mismanaged union pension funds, funding for climate justice, backdoor money for Planned Parenthood, an exclusive paid leave program for government bureaucrats, and the list goes on and on.

Before the bill was even signed into law, folks from the other side of the aisle started advocating making many of the provisions permanent. This is an emergency measure, supposedly, but folks advocated making those temporary provisions permanent, further proof that this is more than just a pandemic relief response; this is about, in the words of Mr. CLYBURN, restructuring government as we know it.

But it doesn't stop there. Now our Democratic colleagues in the House and some in the Senate apparently want to hijack the State and Federal election system, starting with making temporary pandemic election responses permanent. Of course, our elections are run at the State and local level. As a matter of fact, I recall, given the efforts of the Russian intelligence services to interfere with our election in 2016, one of the strengths of our system was its dispersed nature, suggesting, in other words, that if it had been a single system, it would have been much easier for our adversaries to interfere—and particularly in the cyber realm.

But we know, as a result of the pandemic, States made provisional changes to their 2020 election processes to make sure that people could safely exercise their right to vote. In my State, we extended early voting. We allowed voters to submit mail-in ballots in designated drop boxes.

Several States, of course, expanded eligibility for mail-in voting. Some, like California, took things even further and sent mail-in ballots to every registered voter. At the time, these changes were billed as temporary, given the unique and extraordinary nature of the challenges presented by the pandemic, but as the House minority whip has said, this pandemic, apparently, is viewed as a tremendous opportunity to restructure the way we run and conduct elections.

House Democrats have passed legislation to make many of the temporary changes in the 2020 elections permanent and add a list of other so-called reforms in order to federalize our State- and local-run elections. This is in the face of article I of the Constitution that explicitly gives the States the power to regulate the times, places, and manner of holding elections.

Yet this 791-page document creates a one-size-fits-all mandate for all States. It actually preempts State law, starting with mail-in balloting. Any person in any State could request a mail-in ballot for any reason. There is no need to say why you can't vote in person,