

comes to speaking. I wish to finish my remarks, but if I can have the permission of the Chair by unanimous consent and allow the majority leader to speak and then resume my statement after he is finished.

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

Mr. McCONNELL. I thank my friend from Illinois.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

NOMINATION OF KIRSTJEN NIELSEN

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, yesterday, the Senate voted to advance the nomination of Kirstjen Nielsen to be Secretary of Homeland Security. Now it is time for us to vote to confirm her so she can get to work for the American people. By confirming Ms. Nielsen's nomination to lead the DHS, this Senate will take a serious step toward strengthening our Nation's security.

Ms. Nielsen will be charged with leading the Department at a critical time. With her understanding of the challenges facing our Nation and her experience in prevention and preparedness, I believe she will excel as the next Secretary of Homeland Security. Her leadership will also help in providing continued assistance to the men and women still suffering from the effects of the recent natural disasters in our country. Our Nation faces a myriad of threats, and I look forward to working with Ms. Nielsen to address each of them.

FUNDING THE GOVERNMENT

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, as we all know, we must pass legislation to fund the government before the end of the week. By approving a short-term bill, we can continue the crucial functions of the Federal Government while we work with our colleagues in the House and the Trump administration to finalize a long-term plan.

The temporary funding measure will come before the House soon, and I expect the Senate to consider it shortly thereafter. It is a clean bill, free from any sort of objectionable policy riders. In addition, it includes a provision to assure States of the future of the Children's Health Insurance Program while a bipartisan reauthorization agreement is completed. All Members should be able to support this noncontroversial, short-term legislation.

We will continue working to pass a funding agreement that advances a number of American priorities—something we will be discussing with the President on Thursday, along with Democratic leaders of the House and Senate.

Yesterday, the Senate Democratic leader expressed his opposition to a government shutdown. I certainly agree with him. So I hope he and his fellow Democrats will continue to work with us in good faith to pass this short-term funding bill and maintain the critical functions of the Federal Government.

TAX REFORM BILL

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, one final matter. Last night, our colleagues in the House voted to send the tax reform legislation to a conference committee. There, Members from both Chambers will work to resolve the differences in our bills and eventually enable us to send a final product to the President for his signature.

The House's action last night is more progress in our years-long effort to deliver real relief to the men and women we represent. I am grateful to our friends in the House for their willingness to continue working with us to help shift our economy into high gear. I look forward to the Senate voting to join the conference later this week.

In the end, both Chambers will have an opportunity to pass the final legislation to help families keep more of their hard-earned money, to create good jobs, and to jump-start economic growth. I look forward to working with all of our colleagues to get this done.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The assistant Democratic leader.

NATIONAL MONUMENTS DESIGNATION

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, resuming my earlier remarks, the Native-American Tribes almost unanimously opposed the action that was announced yesterday by President Trump and Secretary Zinke to shrink the Bears Ears Monument. They have passed resolutions in support of that monument.

Navajo Nation's president said that the President's efforts to shrink the monument "demonstrates their failure to listen to the concerns of our people who have lobbied and fought for over 80 years for this designation." Even worse, the Navajo Nation made several requests to meet with President Trump on the issue, to no avail. Those requests fell on deaf ears, and the administration never met with the leadership of the Navajo Nation or any of the other Tribes who worked to protect this area.

The administration took these actions under the guise of protecting this area for future generations. During President Trump's speech in Utah, he said:

I don't think it is controversial, actually. I think it's so sensible.

From the folks he was speaking to, it must have seemed that his comment was correct, but the group the President was speaking to was a closed-door group of selected supporters of his ad-

ministration who do not reflect the feelings of local residents when it comes to the future of this monument. It reflected the same closed-door process this administration had used to shrink these monuments.

The administration ignored that more than 2.8 million Americans weighed in when there was an open public comment period at the Department of the Interior. Ninety-eight percent of them asked the President to protect the monuments and to maintain their borders—98 percent. So to say that shrinking these monuments dramatically is not controversial is to ignore 2.8 million Americans and the Tribes with whom the President never took the time to meet.

With these reductions, it is clear that Secretary Zinke and President Trump are choosing politics over science and choosing economic and political local concerns over the reality of what this particular monument means to the future of America. They are ignoring Utah's State Historic Preservation Office and the Interior Department's own staff, both confirming that there are artifacts throughout Bears Ears that will now lose their protection because of the decision by President Trump yesterday. The administration's proposed cuts closely follow the desires of Utah politicians to shrink the monument.

I had the opportunity to meet with Secretary Zinke and some of my colleagues a few weeks ago to discuss this reduction in the size of the monuments. In that meeting, he assured me that any potential cuts to Bears Ears would continue to protect the actual site's antiquities, including archeological sites, but according to the internal documents from the Department of the Interior, there are more than 8,400 archeological sites in the monument, 70 percent of which are prehistoric. Even more interesting, according to the Department of the Interior staff, less than 10 percent of the monument has truly been surveyed. That means we have only scratched the surface of the antiquities that could be present there.

What value is it to the people of Utah, what value is it to San Juan County, UT, what value is it to the United States to allow spectators and tourists to roam over these areas without acknowledging their sacred status and historic importance? We only get one chance to preserve our history, and now the President is walking away from that chance for the largest part of the Bears Ears Monument. Taking away protections from these precious places is something that could lead to permanent damage.

During the time that I visited Bears Ears, I stopped near Fry Canyon for a little lunch. I hiked around and saw some amazing artifacts, which I showed in the earlier photograph. These amazing artifacts are outside the new boundaries President Trump decided to draw yesterday. These impressive artifacts are worth preserving, but