

Federation, in response to its illegal invasion and occupation of the Ukrainian territory of Crimea. Since then, the Government of the Russian Federation continues to illegally occupy Crimea and has utterly failed to fulfill its obligations under the Minsk Agreements to end its violent aggression in eastern Ukraine. Russia has failed to respect a full ceasefire; it has failed to pull back its heavy weaponry; it has failed to permit the monitoring and verification of a ceasefire regime; and it has failed to ensure access for humanitarian aid to conflict-affected individuals.

The story does not stop with Ukraine. Since 2014, the Government of the Russian Federation has greatly expanded its aggression around the world, including against the United States with the attack on our 2016 election. The Kremlin continues to interfere in elections, wage cyber attacks, engage in corruption and political meddling, and spread lies and disinformation—all with the goal to divide societies, undermine the rules-based international order, and break up longstanding transatlantic alliances. Our intelligence community has repeatedly asserted that the Kremlin will likely target our elections again this fall. The very ideal of democracy as a system of government is under constant assault from a Kremlin bent on destroying the international rules-based order.

Upon considering these facts, no observer could seriously think Russia deserves to be welcomed back into the G-7 club. Any such suggestion is ludicrous and must be dismissed out of hand.

The United States is a country long governed by the rule of law, where breaking the rules has consequences. More broadly, the United States has helped to create the rules-based order in the international community that has undoubtedly served the interests of the American people and benefited the world since the end of WWII by fostering peace and prosperity. The United States is bound with other G-7 nations not just because of the size of our economies, but because of our shared values and common cause to foster societies in which our citizens can live freely, peacefully, and prosperously. Inviting the current Government of the Russian Federation to rejoin the circle of G-7 world leaders when President Vladimir Putin's regime poses an ongoing threat to our freedom, peace, and prosperity serves his interests, not ours.

President Trump's suggestion to readmit Russia to the G-7 and his subsequent disavowal of the joint communique which the United States and other G-7 nations successfully negotiated in Charlevoix defy logic. More outrageously, they reflect his propensity to praise autocrats while attacking our allies and the democratic values and rules-based system they defend. Does it put America first to side with autocrats? This President seems to think so.

I have submitted an amendment to the defense authorization bill calling on President Trump to retract his comments on readmitting Russia to the G-7. Absent any change in the Kremlin's efforts to undermine the rules-based international order or its illegal occupation of Crimea, the G-7 should not even consider welcoming the Russian Federation back into its fold, let alone with open arms. This amendment sends a necessary and strong message that the United States stands by our friends and the international rules-based order that benefits American workers and American national security. I am committed to working with my Senate colleagues on both sides of the aisle to shore up our closest alliances and to hold the Russian government accountable for its aggression in Ukraine, the United States, and beyond. I urge adoption of this amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for as long as I may require.

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

CONGRATULATING MITCH MCCONNELL AS THE LONGEST SERVING SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, the Senate majority leader, Senator MITCH MCCONNELL of Kentucky, will become the longest serving Senate Republican leader in history, surpassing former Senator Bob Dole of Kansas. This is according to the Senate historical office. Today is Senator MCCONNELL's 4,179th day as Senate Republican leader—a position he assumed on January 3, 2007, after Republicans lost control of both Chambers of Congress.

I would like to take a few minutes to put Senator MCCONNELL's leadership in perspective. That perspective begins in the year 1969. I was 29 years old and working in the Nixon White House. Senator Howard Baker, Jr., of Tennessee, said to me: "You might want to get to know that smart, young legislative assistant for Marlow Cook." Marlow Cook was Kentucky's newly elected Republican Senator. That smart, young legislative assistant was 27-year-old MITCH MCCONNELL.

If one has known him for a long time, the evolution of MITCH MCCONNELL's Senate leadership isn't hard to trace. To begin with, when he was 2 years old, the doctor said: "Mitch has polio." It is hard to imagine today how terrifying those words were for parents then. McConnell remembers:

It was 1944. There was a serious epidemic that year all over the country. And the disease was very unpredictable. First, you'd think you had the flu, and a couple of weeks later, some people would be completely normal and some of them would be in an iron lung or dead.

He continued:

In my case, it affected my left quadriceps, the muscle between the knee and your thigh. And in one of the great good fortunes of my life, my mother was living with her sister in this little crossroads of Five Points, Alabama, where there was not even a stoplight—while my dad was overseas fighting the Germans—and it happened to be 60 miles from Warm Springs, where President Roosevelt had gone [to treat his own polio]. My mother took me to Warm Springs. They taught her a physical therapy regimen, and said to do it four times a day and to keep me off my feet. She watched me every minute and prevented me from really walking.

My first memory in life is when they told my mother I was going to be okay, that I'd be able to walk without a limp, and we stopped at a shoe store in LaGrange, Georgia, on the way back to Alabama to get a pair of low top shoes, which were a kind of symbol I was going to have a normal childhood.

If one knows about the determination of MITCH MCCONNELL's mother, it is not hard to imagine how her son determined as a college student to be a U.S. Senator, and did; determined to be his party's Senate leader, and did; and then determined to hold that leadership position longer than anyone in U.S. history, and has. This was an arduous, two-decade leadership journey: chairman of the National Republican Senatorial Committee, counselor to Majority Leader Trent Lott, majority whip, minority leader, and finally, majority leader.

As for his mother's example, this is what MITCH MCCONNELL said: "It sure had to have an effect on me, which was that if you stick to something, you keep working at it and giving it your best, the chances are you may actually overcome whatever problem you're currently confronting."

A second leadership quality that MITCH MCCONNELL learned early—in a fistfight—was to not be pushed around. According to MCCONNELL, "I was about 7. We lived in Athens, Alabama, and I had a friend across the street named Dicky McGrew who was a year older than I was and considerably bigger. He was also a bully and he kept kind of pushing me around. And my dad called me over and said, 'Son, I've been watching the way he's been pushing you around and I want you to go over there and I want you beat him up.'"

So, MCCONNELL says, "I went across the street and started swinging and I beat him up and bent his glasses, and it was an incredible lesson in standing up to bullies and I've thought about that throughout my life at critical moments when people are trying to push you around."

As a junior Senator on the Foreign Relations Committee, MITCH MCCONNELL surprised colleagues when he sponsored sanctions against the apartheid regime in South Africa, and then