

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, in order to place the bills on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I would object to further proceedings en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection having been heard, the bills will be placed on the calendar.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

(Ms. ERNST assumed the Chair.)

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

#### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

#### CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

#### EXECUTIVE SESSION

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination Brian McGuire, of New York, to be a Deputy Under Secretary of the Treasury.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

#### UKRAINE

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, I just listened to the majority leader come to the floor and tell Members of the Senate that they should close their eyes and box their ears to the current scandal that is engulfing the White House and the Trump administration. I heard the majority leader accuse Democrats of “politicizing” President Trump’s demand that the Government of Ukraine interfere in the 2020 election. That is a laughable charge, and it is not going to silence us on this matter of grave importance.

First of all, I have no idea what it means to politicize something these days. News flash: We are politicians. We practice politics. That is our job. I get told very often that I am politicizing gun violence when I suggest that maybe we should pass laws in order to change the daily trajectory of violence in this country. Yet the very reason we are here is to protect the safety of our constituents and to protect the sanctity of our democracy.

What we are standing up for right now is the rule of law, and I hope, over the course of this week, my Republican colleagues will join us in that basic responsibility that Members of the Senate and House of Representatives have.

We see the rule of law slipping away from us right now. We see our Nation being turned into a banana republic where the President can do anything he wants and turn the organs of state into his permanent political machine—his means of crushing his opponents. Today we see that many of my Republican colleagues are not just letting it happen but facilitating it.

There has to be a line that the President cannot cross. There has to be a moment when we all stand up and say: This has gone too far.

The President has admitted this weekend to asking a foreign leader to open an investigation into one of his political opponents as a means of advancing himself politically. That is not allowed in a democracy. That fundamentally corrupts the foreign policy of our Nation. It makes us all less safe when foreign governments now wonder whether they are going to be enlisted into the political operation of the President of the United States. This has always been a no-go area for Democratic and Republican administrations because we understand the vast power the Presidency has. If the President chooses to use that power and the leverage he has over people in this country and in other countries to do his political bidding, then there is nothing to protect any of us from the executive branch.

The idea that the President can openly admit that he is asking a foreign government to get involved in his political reelection campaign—and believe that he will get away with it—suggests a belief in the impunity surrounding his office. We should all be concerned about that.

At the very least, if my Republican colleagues don’t share my grave alarm at the disclosures of the last 48 hours, then we should at least agree that the whistleblower complaint needs to come before the Congress unredacted. There is no fuzzy penumbra around this law. It is clear as day. If a whistleblower makes a complaint that is deemed urgent in nature, it must be presented to the Congress. The President cannot hold it back; the executive branch cannot make it a secret.

What makes it worse is that the President seems to be playing a game with this whistleblower complaint. He seems to be teasing out little bits of information that are contained in it here and there in order to play to his political advantage. It is even worse than holding back the complaint from us. He is now using pieces of it to try to gain advantage over his political opponents.

At the very least, over the next 24 hours, we need to come to a conclusion that the law needs to be followed. If the President can withhold from us whistleblower complaints that are not

flattering to him—that potentially implicate him—then what is the point of having a whistleblower law? What is the point of having a process to protect people who are uncovering corruption in the administration if the administration can keep those complaints secret?

Let’s just be honest. If this President gets away with it, the next Democratic President can get away with it, and the next Republican President can get away with it. We will have lost all of our power to see into the wrongdoing of an administration. There will be a day when Republicans want to see into potential wrongdoing of an administration of the opposite party, but that will be all gone if we don’t, at the very least, come to the conclusion that we need to see it as the law states.

That is just the beginning because I think—as the President has advertised—that complaint is going to show he did, indeed, try to pressure a foreign government to conduct investigations into one of his political opponents. I think this is a really serious moment for the country. I think it is a really serious moment for the prerogatives of the article I branch.

I understand that my Republican colleagues may not be ready to talk about consequences for the administration for their wrongdoing, but, at the very least, we need to come together and make sure we have all of the information necessary.

By the way, it doesn’t end with the whistleblower complaint because the whistleblower complaint is likely going to raise even more questions that we are going to have to answer. We have a duty to then go out and find additional information.

For many, the President’s admission of guilt may be enough to make a determination about what the next steps are. But for those who aren’t persuaded that there have to be consequences for the President’s admission of corruption, then we should use the organs at our disposal to try to figure out the rest of the details surrounding this incident or series of incidents. What kinds of contacts have the President’s representatives been having with the Ukrainian Government? Has the State Department been involved in trying to do the President’s political bidding in and around Ukraine? How many people in the administration knew about this? Who tried to stop it? Who has been involved in keeping the whistleblower complaint from us? There are so many questions that need to be answered here, and it should be our responsibility to get to the bottom of all of them.

I think this is a really serious moment for this country. I think the minute the President is able to turn the foreign policy of this Nation into a vehicle for his own political advancement is the day that democracy, as we know it, slips away from us. If we aren’t ready to have a bipartisan conversation about consequences and remedies this week, then let’s at least have

some bipartisan consensus in the way that this place used to have all the time, making sure that we have all of the information necessary to move forward.

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.

Mr. MENENDEZ. 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. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 15 minutes.

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

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, we have heard some deeply disturbing revelations in recent days about President Trump's efforts to tie congressionally appropriated security funding for Ukraine hostage to its government's willingness to investigate his political opponents here at home. The alleged threat by President Trump to withhold vital security funding from Ukraine came out last week in press reports about a whistleblower complaint from a U.S. intelligence official. These revelations suggest a gross abuse of power unlike anything I have ever seen during my 27 years of working on U.S. foreign policy. They also show Donald Trump once again welcoming a foreign power to influence our elections, this time using the power of the White House.

As of today, the Acting Director of National Intelligence has refused to comply with the law that requires him to share this whistleblower complaint with Congress. Yet that hasn't stopped multiple members of the President's inner circle from all but confirming that the President pushed Ukrainian President Zelensky to open an investigation into former Vice President Joe Biden. They have, together, engaged in a disturbing effort to convince the American people that this sort of behavior is somehow normal.

We first watched the President's personal lawyer admit on CNN that he had raised this issue of investigating Biden on the President's behalf. Then, yesterday, we saw Secretary Pompeo sink to a new low when he defended this behavior on national TV. Then it was the President himself who admitted it to reporters—the President himself. I am not sure what more evidence we need, folks.

Where are my Republican colleagues? Where are those supposed defenders of democracy and freedom? Where are the advocates for a strong relationship with Ukraine? They are silent, shamefully silent.

For more than 2 months, the President held up \$391 million in urgently needed security assistance for Ukraine—assistance that was appropriated by the Senate with broad bipar-

tisan support. Congress didn't pass this funding so that the President could sit on it. We didn't pass this funding so that the President could use it as leverage to get Ukraine to investigate his political opponents. We passed this funding because Ukraine needs our support against relentless Russian aggression and because providing that support is in the interest of our own national security goals.

Many of us were certainly not surprised to see this administration delay assistance to Ukraine given the President's repeated cowering to Moscow on the international stage. Yet, for 2 months, we wondered exactly why this money was being held from Ukraine. Now we know. The President withheld this money all in the hopes that the Ukrainian Government would open a bogus investigation into Vice President Biden's son. How is that not an abuse of power?

I welcome efforts in the House to fully investigate the role of the President's personal lawyer in pressuring a foreign country to investigate the family of a potential political opponent. I urge the Senate to follow suit because a legitimate President would never allow his lawyer to override bipartisan support for Ukraine. A legitimate President would not let his personal lawyer compel foreign powers to interfere in our political process. A legitimate President would not withhold congressionally appropriated funding to Ukraine to advance his reelection prospects. So I am calling for a series of measures today to get to the bottom of this.

First, I call upon the inspector general of the State Department to review the withholding of security assistance for Ukraine. This review must include the extent to which the Department was aware of or was part of the decision to withhold these funds and whether our foreign assistance laws were broken. The inspector general must also examine whether the State Department knew why the administration was withholding these funds and highlight any communications between the White House and the State Department on this matter.

Second, I call upon the State Department to provide all details and records about any support in any form provided from the Department for the President's personal lawyer's efforts in Ukraine. We, likewise, need to know about any briefings the President's personal lawyer provided to Department personnel and his interactions with Ukrainian officials.

Third, I call on the Office of Management and Budget to tell Congress why it sat on Ukraine's security assistance for more than 2 months. It typically takes the OMB just 5 days to review notifications from the implementing agencies. To sit on a notification for more than 2 months is unorthodox, unprecedented, and unacceptable.

Fourth, I call upon the Senate Committees on Foreign Relations, Appro-

priations, Armed Services, and the Select Committee on Intelligence to immediately hold hearings on the President's purported use of security assistance to pressure Ukraine to open an investigation into a political opponent. I urge Chairman RISCH to fulfill his commitments to hold a hearing on Russia and a markup on Russia sanctions soon.

If President Trump had used money to coerce another person to perform some corrupt action on his behalf, we would call it out for what it was—extortion. Are we just going to let the President of the United States extort foreign leaders? Are we going to let him reshape American foreign policy to advance his own personal and political goals? Is this not a gross abuse of Presidential power? If not, then what is? These committees have a responsibility to ask these questions, and they have a constitutional responsibility to do their jobs.

The Senate, as a whole, has an obligation to get to the bottom of this. Do my Republican colleagues really think it is OK to ask a foreign power to pursue unfounded allegations against a political opponent? Is this the new normal? I hope not. This is behavior that we have never seen from an American President. Unfortunately, it is behavior that fits into President Trump's broader pattern of surrendering to his patrons in Moscow.

I wish I could say that extorting Ukraine were the only way Donald Trump corrupted our national security over the course of the summer, but that is just not the case. Last month, President Trump also redirected funding for the European Deterrence Initiative to his ridiculous border wall. Funding for the European Deterrence Initiative helps our allies counter the kind of Russian malign influence that was deployed by Putin against our democracy in 2016.

It is well known by now that President Trump was lying when he said that Mexico would pay for the wall. To this day, he refuses to own up to this lie, so much so that he is willing to siphon dollars away from our military and abandon our most vital democratic allies in Europe to pursue a medieval vanity project. It is yet another example of his selling out our national security to curry favor with his political base.

Over the past few weeks, my office has heard from several European Embassies that are now stuck holding the bill for Trump's wall. While you won't hear it from them publicly because they, too, fear a backlash from this President, they are offended and angry about this decision. It is simply astounding. We are talking about the allies that Americans fought and died for in order to defend democracy, worked so hard to rebuild after World War II, and continued to protect during the Cold War.

I am sure the Kremlin couldn't be happier. To Putin, this must be a

stroke of genius. Trump is killing two birds with one stone by redirecting these funds. He is dividing us from our European allies in the face of Russian aggression and dividing the American people with his politics of hate. I have said it before, and I will say it again: Investing in Donald Trump's candidacy was the best decision Putin ever made. His patron at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue will stop at nothing to repay the debt. It might indeed be the only debt businessman Donald Trump has ever worked so hard to repay.

My friends, we have witnessed a real summer of love between Trump and Putin. Consider the G7 meeting in France last month. So clearly was the United States not the leading voice at the table. So tragically have we lost the confidence of our closest allies, and so predictably did our President once again make an appeal on behalf of his patron in Moscow by repeatedly calling for the expansion of the G7 to include Russia.

Sometimes I wonder: Does President Trump actually think that Russia is a democracy? Does he think that the Russian people live in freedom? Does he see Russia as an advanced economy? Does he believe Russia shares America's interests?

I have to say that little surprises me these days, but even I was taken aback to see him blame President Obama for Russia's behavior—on foreign soil, no less.

There is only one country responsible for Russia's removal from the G8 in 2014, and that is Russia. The Russian Federation was suspended from the G8 by its fellow countries because of its invasion and illegal occupation of Crimea, which is the territory of the sovereign nation Ukraine. Five years later, more than 10,000 Ukrainian patriots are dead. That is why Russia does not belong in the G8.

What has the Kremlin done since 2014 that could possibly justify an expansion of the G7? Has it suspended its illegal occupation? Has it behaved like a responsible member of the international community? Has it respected the sovereignty of other nations? The answers are no, no, and no.

Let's review Russia's behavior since 2014.

First—and on the top of mind for many of us—was Russia's sweeping and systematic interference in our 2016 Presidential election on behalf of then-Candidate Donald Trump, as is documented in the special counsel's sobering report. Spreading propaganda, manipulating social media, and spying on American election infrastructure is not the behavior of a G7 country.

Second was the Kremlin's chemical weapons attack on British soil—a blatant assassination attempt against a Putin opponent and his daughter. One British citizen was killed, and others required medical attention. This is not an isolated case. Just last month, a Russian citizen was gunned down in a park in Berlin at the suspected hand of the Russian authorities.

This is not the behavior of a G7 country.

Third is the Kremlin's complicity in Bashar al-Assad's war crimes in Syria. An untold number of Syrian civilians have been killed by Russian airstrikes launched in support of Assad. Those responsible should be tried in The Hague on war crimes charges. This is not the behavior of a G7 country.

Fourth, in recent weeks, Russian forces have ramped up their pressure on the country of Georgia. More than 11 years after Russia's invasion, the Georgian people suffer under its ongoing aggression. That is not the behavior of a G7 country.

Fifth is the recent Russian crackdown on demonstrators exercising their basic political rights. Throughout the summer, Putin oversaw the brutal beatings of children, women, and men and subjected everyday Russian citizens to arbitrary arrest and detention. What was their ask? What was their plea? That they be able to register their own local candidates for their own local elections.

The Kremlin's ongoing and too often violent oppression of the Russian people is not the behavior of a G7 country. No country in the G7 acts this way. This behavior is destabilizing, it is aggressive, it is authoritarian, and it does not belong at the table of democracies.

It is truly a disgrace that any American President would so easily discount all of what I have just described to win favor with his patron and pal.

Of course, these aren't the only gifts bestowed by President Trump during this summer of love.

Let's not forget how the President has delayed sanctions on Turkey over its purchase of the Russian S-400 system. Congress passed these sanctions under the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act, or CAATSA, in response to Russia's attack on our elections in 2016. We have these sanctions for a reason. They advance America's national security interests. They starve the Russian defense sector of much needed international business. By not imposing them, this President is both failing to hold Russia accountable and sending a dangerous message to other countries that they can buy Russian weapon systems without consequence. From the moment we passed CAATSA, this administration has resisted every step of the way.

So let's imagine, for a moment, what a legitimate American President, a President who is not a Putin puppet, would do in this situation. How would that person protect our country?

First, a legitimate President would not endanger the relationship with a key ally in order to gain political advantage at home. They would show solidarity with our democratic allies by providing all appropriated security assistance to Ukraine and funding for European efforts to counter Russian aggression.

Second, I am sure they would not welcome Russia back into the G7.

Third, they would impose CAATSA sanctions on Turkey and send a clear message to the world that the United States is serious about imposing pressure on the Russian defense industry.

So let me close. The United States of America must always stand on the side of democracy, human rights, freedom, and the rule of law. That is why we must secure our elections from the threat of foreign interference at home and defend democracies in the face of Russian aggression abroad.

That is why we must demand that security funding appropriated by Congress is actually delivered and that the sanctions we craft to counter our adversaries are imposed.

That is why we cannot be silent when an American President extorts foreign countries into influencing our elections or welcomes an authoritarian strongman's return to the G7.

I implore my colleagues to use the powers of Article I of the Constitution. We have to get to the bottom of these very issues and preserve the critical checks and balances we have in our Nation.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. 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 Brian McGuire, of New York, to be a Deputy Under Secretary of the Treasury.

Mitch McConnell, Tom Cotton, Roger F. Wicker, Rob Portman, John Thune, Kevin Cramer, John Barrasso, James E. Risch, Richard Burr, James M. Inhofe, Lindsey Graham, Rick Scott, John Boozman, Mike Crapo, Tim Scott, John Hoeven, Deb Fischer.

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

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Brian McGuire, of New York, to be a Deputy Under Secretary of the Treasury, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM), the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON), the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. ROBERTS), the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS), and the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. TOOMEY).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Colorado (Mr. BENNET), the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER), the Senator from California (Ms. HARRIS), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN), and the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. WHITEHOUSE) are necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 82, nays 6, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 294 Ex.]

YEAS—82

Alexander	Fischer	Peters
Baldwin	Gardner	Portman
Barrasso	Grassley	Reed
Blackburn	Hassan	Romney
Blumenthal	Hawley	Rosen
Blunt	Heinrich	Rounds
Boozman	Hirono	Rubio
Braun	Hoeven	Sasse
Burr	Hyde-Smith	Schatz
Cantwell	Inhofe	Schumer
Capito	Johnson	Scott (FL)
Cardin	Jones	Scott (SC)
Carper	Kaine	Shaheen
Cassidy	Kennedy	Shelby
Collins	King	Sinema
Coons	Klobuchar	Smith
Cornyn	Lankford	Stabenow
Cortez Masto	Leahy	Sullivan
Cotton	Lee	Tester
Cramer	Manchin	Thune
Crapo	McConnell	Udall
Cruz	McSally	Van Hollen
Daines	Menendez	Warner
Duckworth	Moran	Wicker
Durbin	Murkowski	Wyden
Enzi	Murphy	Young
Ernst	Murray	
Feinstein	Perdue	

NAYS—6

Brown	Gillibrand	Merkley
Casey	Markey	Paul

NOT VOTING—12

Bennet	Isakson	Tillis
Booker	Risch	Toomey
Graham	Roberts	Warren
Harris	Sanders	Whitehouse

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 82, the nays are 6. The motion is agreed to.

The senior Senator from Tennessee.

KEN BURNS' "COUNTRY MUSIC"

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, Ken Burns told me last year that his 8-part, 16-hour "Country Music" film, which concludes on PBS this week, could be more popular than his Civil War film. After watching the first episodes, I suspect he might be right. His new film plumbs the depths of the American soul, using the one tool—music—that is the most likely to touch the largest number of us.

As a U.S. Senator from Tennessee, I will confess my bias. The first 2 hours of "Country Music" a week ago Sunday were about the recordings of hillbilly music in 1927 at the birthplace of country music in Bristol, where the Tennessee-Virginia State line runs down the middle of Main Street. Two years ago, the Senator from Virginia, Mr. KAINE, and I, played a little concert—I on the keyboard and he on the harmonica—at the end of that Main Street, at a fiddler's festival that they had. The rest of the Ken Burns episode winds through a community called

Boogertown in Eastern Tennessee, in the Smoky Mountains, where Dolly Parton was born, to the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville and to Beale Street in Memphis.

We like to say that the whole world sings with Tennessee, but country music is more than Tennessee music. It is more than Appalachian music. It is more than the music of poor white Americans. It comes from the heart.

As Burns' and Duncan's storytelling reminds us, every one of us has a heart. There is no better evidence of this than paying less than \$20 to sit at a table at the Bluebird Cafe in Nashville. There you listen to three songwriters tell the stories behind their songs and play them for a small audience who doesn't even whisper during their performances.

I sat at the Bluebird on a Saturday in 2013, listening to a young songwriter, Jessi Alexander, sing her song, "I Drive Your Truck." One of her cowriters, Connie Harrington, had heard the story on NPR. It was the story of Jared Monti, an American soldier killed in Afghanistan trying to save another soldier. He won a Congressional Medal of Honor for that. To remember his son, his father, Paul, drives Jared's Dodge Ram truck because, the father says, "I am alone, in the truck, with him." When Jessi Alexander finished singing, everyone in the Bluebird was weeping. I said to the person next to me, "That has to be the song of the year," and it was.

Last week, I attended the Annual Nashville Songwriter Awards show. I looked through the program listing all of the previous songs of the year. In 2012, it was Dolly Parton's farewell song to Porter Wagoner, "I Will Always Love You." Dolly Parton is a great songwriter too. In 2003, it was "Three Wooden Crosses." In 1972, it was "Old Dogs, Children, and Watermelon Wine," by Tom T. Hall. Then, in 1969, it was "Okie from Muskogee," by Merle Haggard. "Three chords and the truth" is how songwriter Harlan Howard defines country music.

Ken Burns has become America's storyteller, a skill much more difficult than it would seem. He tackles the subjects that divide us, like the Civil War and Vietnam, and he presents them in a form that allows us to travel through those wrenching experiences, gathering the information we need to form our own opinions.

One could argue that Ken Burns is our most effective teacher of U.S. history, a subject woefully undertaught in our schools. The lowest scores on high school Advanced Placement tests are not in math and science. They are in American history. So I am glad to know that there is more of Ken Burns' work to come.

According to a New Yorker article in 2017, during the next decade Burns plans to produce films about the Mayo Clinic, Muhammad Ali, Ernest Hemingway, the American Revolution, Lyndon B. Johnson, Barack Obama, Winston

Churchill, the American criminal justice system, and African-American history from the Civil War to the Great Migration.

Producing these films must cost a lot of money, but, in my view, every penny that the Public Broadcasting System and private contributors have spent has been worth it. If I had the money, I would ask Burns how much time he will spend raising funds to pay for these next films and I would give him the amount of money that it would take so that he could spend that time producing an extra three or four more films before he hangs it up. Since I don't have the money, maybe someone else will do that.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to be printed in the RECORD an op-ed that was in the New York Times, "Country Music Is More Diverse Than You Think," by Ken Burns and Dayton Duncan.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the New York Times, Sept. 13, 2019]

COUNTRY MUSIC IS MORE DIVERSE THAN YOU THINK  
COMMON STEREOTYPES OVERLOOK THE ROLES THAT BLACKS AND WOMEN HAVE PLAYED IN SHAPING A UNIQUELY AMERICAN GENRE

(By Ken Burns and Dayton Duncan)

This spring the rapper Lil Nas X, who is black, released "Old Town Road," a twang-inflected song that rocketed to the top of the country music charts—even though Billboard temporarily removed it from the list, saying it wasn't sufficiently "country."

A few months later, when the Country Music Association announced that three women—Dolly Parton, Reba McEntire and Carrie Underwood—would host its annual awards show, some people criticized the choice as political correctness, as if "real" country music was restricted to good old boys.

Both controversies reflect the stereotypes that chronically surround country music. They overlook its diverse roots, its porous boundaries and the central role that women and people of color have played in its history.

Such narrow views would astonish the two foundational acts of the genre—Jimmie Rodgers and the Carter Family—who contributed to country music's early commercial success in the 1920s. They knew firsthand that what has made American music so uniquely American has been its constant mixing of styles and influences.

It all began when the fiddle, which came from Europe, met the banjo, which came from Africa—bringing together ballads and hymns from the British Isles with the syncopations and sensibilities of enslaved blacks. That mix, that "rub," which occurred principally in the South, set off a chain reaction that has reverberated in our music ever since.

The earliest country recordings were known as "hillbilly" music, just as African-American recordings were categorized as "race" music. The names echoed a prevailing prejudice that each genre (and its artists and its fans) was somehow beneath consideration from society's upper rungs—and that each one was unrelated to the other.

In truth, as the two of us learned during the eight years we spent exploring the music and its history, they were always intertwined. The music constantly crossed the racial divide that a segregated nation tried to enforce.

Before his career took off, Rodgers worked as a water boy in Mississippi for the mostly black crews laying railroad track. The men he met, and their music, shaped his own emerging style—the songs he made popular as an adult were essentially the blues, to which he added a distinctive yodel. In 1930, at the height of his popularity, he recorded with Louis Armstrong, the protean jazz artist.

When A.P. Carter collected songs for the Carter Family, he brought along Lesley Riddle, a black slide guitar player, to help him remember the melodies. Riddle also taught the Carters a hymn from his church, “When the World’s on Fire,” which they recorded. They then used the same melody for another song, “Little Darling, Pal of Mine.” Years later Woody Guthrie, a fan of the Carters, borrowed the melody for his classic “This Land Is Your Land.” That one song’s journey encapsulates the real, interconnected story of American music.

Bill Monroe, the father of bluegrass, was mentored by an African-American fiddle player. Hank Williams, the great honky-tonk singer, credited Tee-Tot Payne, a black street musician in Alabama, for “all the music training I ever had.” Bob Wills created Western swing by adapting jazz’s big-band sound to fiddles and steel guitars.

In Memphis in the 1950s, when rhythm and blues and gospel and hillbilly music began swirling together in the eddies of the Mississippi, Elvis Presley, Carl Perkins, Johnny Cash and others pioneered rockabilly, a precursor to rock ‘n’ roll.

The cross-fertilization went in both directions. Charley Pride—the first postwar black artist to have a No. 1 country hit, and the first artist of any color to win the Country Music Association’s male vocalist award two years in a row—was discovered in a bar in Montana, singing Hank Williams’s “Love-sick Blues.” He had grown up listening to the “Grand Ole Opry” show on the radio.

When the rhythm and blues star Ray Charles was given creative control of an album for the first time, he chose to record a selection of country songs. “You take country music, you take black music,” Charles said, and “you got the same goddamn thing exactly.” The album was a sales sensation.

“There’s a truth in the music,” the jazz musician and composer Wynton Marsalis told us, that “the musicians accepted at a time when the culture did not accept. And it’s too bad that we, as a culture, have not been able to address that truth. The art tells more of the tale of us coming together.”

Likewise, the history of country music is filled with strong and talented women in ways the common stereotype seems (or chooses) to overlook. From Patsy Montana to Patsy Cline, Kitty Wells to Dolly Parton, Emmylou Harris to Rosanne Cash to Reba McEntire, women have created some of country music’s most enduring art.

In 1926, A.P. Carter and his wife, Sara, had been turned down by a record label on the theory that a woman singing lead could never be popular. Instead, the Carters added Sara’s cousin Maybelle to the group and went on to make history, centered on Sara’s remarkable voice and Maybelle’s innovative guitar playing, “the Carter scratch,” which has influenced generations of guitarists.

Jimmie Rodgers relied on his sister-in-law, Elsie McWilliams, as the writer of more than a third of his songs. (He couldn’t read musical notations, so she came to his recording sessions to teach her new compositions to him in person.)

In 1966, the same year that the National Organization for Women was founded and the phrase “women’s liberation” was first used, Loretta Lynn wrote and recorded “Don’t

Come Home A Drinkin’ (With Lovin’ on Your Mind),” a statement that dealt with spousal abuse and alcoholism and a woman’s right to her own body, with a bluntness no other musical genre dared make at the time. Her label later held back her song “The Pill” because it seemed too controversial; when it was released, some stations refused to play it—until her fans made it a Top-5 country hit and crossed it over to the pop charts.

“If you write the truth and you’re writing about your life,” Ms. Lynn told us, “it’s going to be country.”

At its best, country music has never been confined to one simple category or convenient stereotype. It sprang from many roots and then sprouted many new branches through the 20th century, creating a complicated chorus of American voices joining together to tell a complicated American story, one song at a time.

Country deals with the most basic, universal human emotions and experiences—love and loss, hardship and dreams, failure and the hope of redemption—and turns them into songs. The songwriter Harlan Howard once defined country music as “three chords and the truth.” Three chords imply simplicity. But the truth part is always much more complex. And more profound.

Mr. ALEXANDER. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

HONORING CAPTAIN VINCENT LIBERTO, JR.

Mr. CASSIDY. Mr. President, I rise today with a heavy heart to honor the life of Mandeville police officer Captain Vincent “Vinnie” Liberto, Jr., who was killed in the line of duty last week. Captain Liberto will be remembered for his life of service to the community and country.

After graduating from Brother Martin High School in New Orleans, he joined the U.S. Marine Corps, where he ultimately served 10 years as sergeant.

Captain Liberto had a combined 30 years of law enforcement service, 5 with the Orleans Parish Sheriff’s Department and 25 years with the Mandeville Police Department, where he was recognized as officer of the year.

The captain had a brilliant mind for law enforcement. He graduated from the FBI National Academy and ran the Mandeville Police Department’s Criminal Investigations Division, where he worked as a polygraphist and was responsible for the Department’s enforcement functions.

Those who knew him best describe him as a gentle giant, polite, upbeat, reasonable, and fairminded—all qualities that make a great police officer.

In his yard flies the Marine Corps flag, and mounted on the front door are twin wreaths, one for the marines and one for the police.

Captain Liberto is survived by his wife, Tracey, and seven children. He was 58 years old.

His passion for service was so strong that he inspired several of his children to follow in their dad’s footsteps by entering the military and law enforcement. That is the definition of setting a great example for children.

Captain Liberto’s death is a painful reminder that our law enforcement officers put their lives on the line to

keep our community safe. He died during a gunfire exchange when a routine traffic stop turned into a tragedy. The other officer, Ben Cato, was also injured but thankfully has returned to work.

Like Captain Liberto and Officer Cato, our law enforcement officers report to work every day knowing that they might not come home at night. They do it for us all, and for that we should always be grateful.

I ask those who are listening to say a prayer for Tracey, their kids, and the officers of the Mandeville Police Department, and for their entire community that is grieving the loss of one of their own.

Vincent Liberto made Louisiana a better place and our country a better place, and he will be sorely missed.

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.

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

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

CHINA

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, I don’t know of any topic that is more important for our country than the relationship between the United States and China.

I am a big fan of history. I love to read about history. I think one of the best ways to understand the future is to understand the past. It strikes me that, at some point in the future, someone will write a book about the 21st century, and I think that book will have mention of a number of the things that consumed our time in political debate. I believe the central issue globally that will define the 21st century is the relationship between the United States and China, in which direction it heads.

Let me say at the outset that China is destined to be what it already is becoming: a rich, important, and powerful nation. That in and of itself should not be threatening. It is a reality. It is one that I think holds promise, to the extent that a rich and powerful China is a responsible stakeholder in the affairs of the world.

I think there is another truth, and that is, what is developing today is an incredibly serious imbalance between the United States and China on trade and commerce, increasingly on diplomacy, and potentially—eventually—militarily and geopolitical.

So when I come today to speak about China, it is not simply in the context of our current trade tensions, which is a part of a much broader issue. The fact of the matter is that this is the way we should view it because this is the way the Communist Party of China views it. The truth is that they view our trade tensions as an inevitable blip in their long-term plan to supplant the

United States of America as the world's dominant political, military, and economic power.

Now, it is understandable why many Americans would feel uneasy at the prospect of being supplanted by China. First of all, they have seen so many of our industries that once thrived in our towns and cities weakened or leave altogether, and they have read about the grotesque violation of human rights and dignity of people and China's Communist Party's persecution of Christians, Muslims, and other religious minorities.

The sad fact is that we have come to this realization far too late in this city. For many years, many of the policy elites across the political spectrum turned a blind eye to this growing threat. There was this notion that, once China became rich and prosperous, they would become like us. It is as if somehow economic prosperity, in the sense and in the way China is achieving it, automatically leads to supporting values such as the ones that we hold dear. But the fact is that we can no longer ignore the reality that this is not the direction that China is headed, and it has implications for our country and the world.

Our country, our workers, and families can no longer afford elected officials in this city who turn a blind eye to the seriousness of this challenge. At this point, given all the information before us and the trends that have clearly emerged, ignorance on this matter is no longer an excuse, and, frankly, the Communist Party of China is no longer hiding its ambition about what this is all about.

I am not asking you to believe my words on this. I just ask that you believe them, that you take their words seriously. That is why I come here to point to a speech last week by Huang Qifan, who is a former Central Committee member and recently retired as the vice chair of the National People's Congress Financial and Economic Affairs Committee. He showed us, by the way, what passes as modernization within the Chinese Communist Party.

In the speech he gave, he didn't speak in the typical Communist jargon. He doesn't invoke abstract theories or laws of history or in any way hold back. He speaks with a frankness that we should actually be grateful for because it enlightens us and hopefully propels us to take action. To Huang, as he makes very clear, the trade war that is ongoing is a fight to the death, an inevitable outcome in a fight between two systems.

Paraphrasing Mao Zedong, he urged Chinese businesspeople to shed their illusions and prepare for struggle. China is the rising power. The United States is the aging hegemon, and China's rise will be sustained.

Huang declared, "At this time, the socialist road with Chinese characteristics is obviously more competitive. . . . than the U.S. economic system." Such confident words are not just his;

they emanate from the very top. Just after gaining power, their current President, apparently for life, Xi Jinping, told the party it is "inevitable that the superiority of our socialist system will be increasingly apparent."

The United States, according to Huang in his speech, cannot make partners and cannot make space for others in the world. Rather, we are stuck. We are stuck in a situation in which China must fight the United States either economically or militarily to find its place in the world.

Throughout his speech, by the way, he points to various events in the U.S. and the Western world that is evidence of the claims that he makes. He points to the financial crisis, to the ballooning deficits, and to what he terms political instability. In very clear language, he says that these are problems that "capitalism can't avoid"—that is his quote—but the Chinese system can through central guidance. "This is our institutional advantage," he argues.

Embedded in his speech, there are two themes. The first is a confidence in the inevitability of China's rise and its conflict with the United States. Closely related to it is a second theme, and that is an appeal to the rest of the world to follow in the Chinese authoritarian model, or, as they call it, socialism with Chinese characteristics. In their telling, it is clearly a superior model to ours.

The time has come for America and our allies, who value freedom and liberty and free enterprise, democracy, human rights, and the dignity of all people—the time has come for us to eagerly confront this assertion. Unfortunately, there are too many in the Western world and in the free world that refuse to see the challenges, indeed, the threat that is posed by the Communist Party and China's vision of the world in the future.

Rather than discuss the technical threat posed by an entity like Huawei, I want to articulate the threat in China's Communist Party's words, the threat in their own words, as Qifan said last week: "Our currency will become the world currency."

Understand the implications of this stated goal. China's aim is to use economic power to displace the United States of America and the role it has played in the world since the end of the Second World War. China's message to the world is that its industries, its workers, and its politics will be more productive than ours. The Chinese Communist Party says to foreign countries, to investors, and to businesses that the long-term play to keep their economies growing is by partnering with them, not partnering with us.

Some may say, What is the big deal about that? Let's just take care of our own problems. Here is the big deal. Here is what it would mean for Americans in real terms. If the world heads in the direction they advocate, it would mean lower wages for you, it would mean homes and mortgages that

are unaffordable, and it would mean a world where what you can say and do abroad but also at home is increasingly dictated by the Chinese Communist Party and its benefactors in the United States and elsewhere.

If you don't believe me, just realize that already major motion pictures produced in Hollywood are censored—censored, even as they are played in the United States because those movies will not have access to Chinese movie theaters. We have already seen multiple American companies have to apologize, take content off the internet, and change T-shirts that they sell at stores because they offend the Communist Party of China and are going to be cut off from selling to that market. It is already happening. It will happen at a much more accelerated pace.

By the way, we have also seen news outlets in some places have to cut back and censor what they say. We have had a television program in a major American network take out content from a program for fear of being censored in the vast Chinese market. Beyond that, the new companies, the new technologies, the improved standards of living, which the United States has always relied on to prove the superiority of our way of life, will also no longer exist.

Indeed, some of these predictions are already happening. The economic growth, the prosperity, and the stability that marks Americans' shared memory of the last century appear to be increasingly absent from this one. Simply put, the Chinese Communist Party believes that the 20th century, which was termed the American Century, was an anomaly, and they believe that they alone have mastered the scientific laws of history, so democracy must stand aside and give way.

We should clearly understand that the Communist Party of China's mission, a mission they term "national rejuvenation" of Chinese power and China's prominent place on the world stage, means supplanting our values and our way of life. As Xi Jinping explained 2 years ago, this goal is the original aspiration and mission of the party.

What is our model? Well, it is incumbent upon us as Americans and as leaders and our democratic allies around the world to make the case that our model is the superior. It is incumbent upon us to make the case on behalf of our model just as aggressively as an authoritarian China is making their case for socialism with Chinese characteristics. Our leadership must also be one that respects human dignity, that defends our interests and religious liberty, democracy and human rights, and the rule of law, which means consistently sticking up for nations committed to these same ideals and standing with people who are fighting for these and being crushed by totalitarianism anywhere in the world.

By the way, in the 20th century and the 21st century, American leadership

brought peace. After the carnage of the first half of the last century, the United States has led the world to avoid open great power conflict, and it meant historically little bloodshed and deep international stability compared to previous eras.

The international system that America helped craft and lead comes with a promise of multilateral security, and that is why we must remain wholly committed to protecting our allies. We spared no cost to help them rebuild to defend themselves and to protect the dignity of their citizens. The Chinese Communist Party, on the other hand, cannot conceive of a world that is not driven by status and hierarchy. They are not partners, and they view no one as partners. They view them as vassal states. So this progress, even to someone like Huang Qifan, is a hidden plot to suppress others.

Such cynicism, by the way, reveals more about the Chinese Communist Party than it does about us or the failure of American efforts to offer a helping hand to China in exchange for modernization. To the Chinese Communist Party, power serves no purpose but to strengthen the party's rule and to spread its influence around the world.

And for them, those who deviate from the party's expectations deserve to be sent to forced labor camps where they toil on the party's behalf and where mass surveillance is a necessary safeguard against deviants whose only crime is to want a private civic life.

As part of making the case for our model, we must continue to make the case as to why China is an untrustworthy partner in any endeavor, whether it is a nation-state project, in an industrial capacity, or financial integration. They have a neocolonial project, the Belt and Road Initiative, which follows a very consistent playbook: Approach nations with promises of lucrative state projects, exploit corruption, bleed those nations dry, and then hijack their domestic infrastructure. In Sri Lanka, what it meant was the de facto takeover of wide swathes of their political system after a project sputtered and Beijing seized the port.

Beijing is ultimately an untrustworthy partner in international commitments. We have seen this repeatedly in the Asia-Pacific where they have flagrantly violated international agreements and obligations in Hong Kong and Taiwan. We see it right off the coast of Vietnam and the Philippines, where Beijing is literally building artificial islands to substantiate ludicrous territorial claims.

Chinese leaders have long claimed to never seek hegemony, and yet the bullying of their neighbors, they justify it, and they justify it on the grounds that China deserves respect because of its power and position. Doing business in China is not just like here or anywhere else. It is not business between two private companies. It means doing business with companies backed by, sponsored by, and protected by the Chinese Communist Party.

Their economy is purposely opaque, and Chinese companies, many of which are state-owned or state-directed, are tools used by the Chinese Communist Party to further their mercantilist goals.

The telecommunications company that we have heard of so often, Huawei, is just one example. Nations that have naively partnered with Huawei on 5G have exposed vital technological infrastructure to Beijing's surveillance state, a partnership that Beijing has shown it will readily exploit.

The bottom line is that China, no matter what, will continue to play a prominent role in the future of our world; and frankly, we should welcome a growing, thriving China, but one that plays by the rules.

Today's China, governed by the Chinese Communist Party, is not playing by any rules. It is a predatory state in nature, and it actively seeks to supplant not just the United States but a world order committed to democracy, human rights, and the dignity of all.

Since their induction into the World Trade Organization in 2001, China has shown itself to be anything but a responsible global partner. This is a dangerous recipe for conflict, and that is what China's leaders are preparing for. Xi put the party on notice in 2013, saying that China "must diligently prepare for a long period of cooperation and of conflict" with capitalist democracies.

If anything, the intervening years have strengthened this conviction. Huang told business leaders that Americans "want your life." He calls it an illusion that "some small amount of money" would resolve the trade war.

"We do not want to fight but are not afraid to fight," Huang concluded, once again quoting Mao.

China clearly sees this moment—these decades, really—as their opportunity to supplant America from its global leadership role. Conflict, armed or otherwise, is an inevitable byproduct of that progression.

America, as Huang noted, has been the "world's leader for decades," and we have used that power to build an international system that prioritizes fundamental human rights, open democratic governance, and liberal economies, all the things that the Communist Party of China believes represents weakness.

So we must be absolutely clear as to what that means. If China becomes the world's dominant economic power, they will become the world's dominant military power; they will become the world's dominant financial power; and they will become the world's dominant cultural power. Given their critique—and I would say disdain—of our system, we can expect that a future such as that will look much different than the reality we live in now.

If China supplants America in the West, the world that our children will inherit will be nothing like the one we grew up in and know. Instead of ex-

ploiting China's brand of authoritarianism country by country, as they do now, China will be positioned to reorient the entire globe, the application of the party's governance at home applied on a global scale to the way countries interact with one another.

Let me close with the prophetic words of a Chinese dissident, Wei Jingsheng. In his testimony before Congress in the year 2000, against and in opposition to China's ascension to the WTO, he said:

If the United States will not fight the world's largest tyranny politically, then inevitably it will have to fight it economically, and eventually, militarily. Therefore, the only way to preserve peace and freedom begins by comprehending democracy's greatest enemy, and countering it effectively.

Blissful ignorance is no longer an option. We cannot overlook the obvious signs in favor of near-term economic gains. The world has reached a crossroads, one in which our inability to act will usher in a Chinese century, and that will have disastrous consequences.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SULLIVAN). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding rule XXII, the cloture motions for the Cella, Jorjani, and Black nominations ripen at 11:30 a.m. on Tuesday, September 24; I further ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding rule XXII, following the cloture vote on the Black nomination, that the Senate resume consideration of the McGuire nomination, and that at 3:30 p.m., all postcloture time on the McGuire, Cella, Jorjani, and Black nominations be considered expired; finally, I ask unanimous consent that if any of the nominations are confirmed, that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's actions.

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

#### LEGISLATIVE SESSION

#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session and 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.