

Our Founding Fathers feared foreign interference in our elections and considered it one of the greatest threats facing our fledgling Republic. Once again, the wisdom of the Founding Fathers shines through. If a foreign country can meddle in or affect the outcome of our elections, Americans will quickly lose faith in our democracy. If Russia or China or Iran controls our elections, what the heck do we vote for? So the alleged offense by the President is clearly serious enough to warrant an investigation by Congress, and that is exactly what the House of Representatives is doing in its impeachment inquiry, and it must continue unimpeded.

We can do two things, and we must do them. We can protect the Constitution and take action to help average working families at the same time. Here in the Senate, we can do both: protect the Constitution and help average working families. It is not either-or. It is not one or the other.

#### SENATE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, from the very beginning, Democrats have been committed to doing the people's business, but while the Democratic majority in the House of Representatives has passed hundreds of bills dealing with healthcare, infrastructure, gun violence, climate change, and much more, Leader McConnell has turned our Chamber into a legislative graveyard. Not one of these bills has received a vote in the Senate: no vote to save protections for people with preexisting conditions, although the American people are pleading with us to do it; no vote on bipartisan background checks, although more people die from gun violence committed by people who shouldn't have guns; no vote on bipartisan election security as Russia threatens us; and no vote on the Violence Against Women Act, when abuse of women continues.

Over the course of his Presidency, President Trump has also failed to offer proposals to address any of these pressing issues. In many cases, his policies and his Executive actions have made things worse.

As Congress comes back into session, Senate Democrats will force our Republican colleagues to vote during this work period on three measures that are important to millions of Americans. These votes will occur under the procedures of the Congressional Review Act. The Congressional Review Act—I know the public is not familiar with the arcane parts of these things—is one of the rare instances where the minority can force a vote. We want to debate these other issues. We want to debate gun violence. We want to debate healthcare. We want to debate infrastructure. We want to debate preexisting conditions. We are not saying our Republican friends are going to think exactly as we do, but let's have a

debate and vote. Leader McConnell, much to the discredit of this Chamber, as well as his own, has said no, but here the Congressional Review Act at least allows us to review some of the overreaching actions of the executive branch and get a vote on them.

Each of these CRA votes will present our Republican colleagues with a choice: whether to protect Americans with preexisting conditions or not to protect them, whether to protect middle-class Americans from a tax hike or not to protect them, and whether to fight climate change or to do nothing.

We will also demand that our Republican colleagues take up legislation to protect hard-earned pensions for millions of American workers. Several of my colleagues will come to the floor this evening to do just that. Senators MANCHIN, BROWN, STABENOW, PETERS, SMITH, BALDWIN, and TESTER have been real leaders on these pension issues. Workers, who for decades put money into their pensions and thought when they retired they would at least have some modicum on which to live decently, will lose all that unless we act.

We hope our Republican colleagues will listen to the debate and help us move to deal with the millions of workers struggling to preserve their pensions.

As we continue to fulfill our solemn constitutional duty to hold the President accountable, Democrats will not—will not—stop putting pressure on Leader McConnell and our friends in the majority to get the Senate back to work for the American people. Democrats will use every tool we have—there are not that many—to stop Leader McConnell from making the Senate a legislative graveyard when the American people need help and action in so many ways.

#### TURKEY AND SYRIA

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, now on Turkey and Syria, a major issue that deserves the Senate's attention this week and that shows we can, again, fulfill our constitutional obligations as well as help the American people. One thing we are going to be talking about this week is President Trump's precipitous and dangerous decision to withdraw from northern Syria.

A few weeks ago, the President abruptly announced that the United States, which has long maintained a presence in northern Syria to root out ISIS terrorists, would stand aside, and Turkey launched a military incursion into the region. For years, a global coalition of the United States and our partners and allies, particularly the stout Kurds in Syria, have worked tirelessly and sacrificed much to defeat ISIS. Now, in only a matter of days, the President's quick, unstudied, and ill-advised Syria decision has jeopardized all of that progress.

For years, American soldiers have fought hard and some have given their

lives to vanquish ISIS. For years, our great military and diplomatic leaders have strategized about how to get rid of ISIS, and in one fell quick and unthought-out swoop, the President has undone that. It is despicable. It is dangerous.

The consequences have already proven dire. Bashar al-Assad, the Syrian dictator and war criminal, has strengthened his position greatly, cutting a deal with the Kurds and moving his forces into the gap left by our withdrawal.

Who else has benefited from President Trump's ill-thought-out, precipitous, and wrongheaded action? Iran, his greatest enemy, one of our great enemies in many ways. As you know, I am no friend of the Iranian Government.

Iran has benefited. Who else has benefited? President Putin. Russian troops have now swept into the region, according to reports. Russia envies the oil in northern Syria that it might control.

When the President does some kind of action, it makes everyone scratch their heads, and if it benefits Putin, one doesn't know if he is doing it to actually help Putin or if he just doesn't get it. I tend to think it is often the former, unfortunately.

Our Kurdish partners are paying the ultimate cost of their betrayal, and tens of thousands of civilians have been displaced. Maybe most concerning of all, reports say that more than 10,000 ISIS fighters currently held and guarded by the Kurds could walk out of their cells. By pulling out of northern Syria, President Trump has encouraged nothing short of an ISIS jailbreak.

I say this to my fellow Americans. Some may say: We don't want any troops anywhere. Bring them all home. We don't care.

Well, I care. Most people care.

But some might say: I don't care what happens to the Kurds.

The one thing everyone should care about, whatever their views on geopolitics in the Middle East and in Syria, is our own security. We have spent a decade of treasure and often lives rooting out ISIS. Why? Because ISIS presents a danger to our homeland. We, in New York, know, more than anybody, how a small group from far away could do huge damage and kill thousands of innocent Americans here. And now President Trump, through this thoughtless action, is allowing ISIS to gain new strength. What is going on here? This is a threat to our own national security here in our homeland, and we must do everything to stop it.

And who is the most angry at the President? From what I am told, our own military is. Our own military, who have fought shoulder-to-shoulder alongside the Kurds, watching the Kurds risk and lose their lives to help protect Americans—they weren't even consulted. The military wasn't even consulted. You heard what General

Mattis said. He may be the most respected military leader we have, even though he is in retirement. He said: This makes it much more likely that ISIS gains strength and can hurt us.

What the heck is going on here? This transcends any ideological differences we may have—whether we agree with President Trump or disagree and whether we think he is a good President or think he is an awful President. This goes beyond that. What is going on?

After Republicans spent years criticizing our former President, President Obama, for simply failing to recite the phrase “radical Islamic terror,” then our Republican friends should be apoplectic at what the President has done. It is not simply reciting this phrase. The President, through his actions, whether it is inadvertent or not, has made radical Islamic terror more real and more dangerous.

In one fell swoop, President Trump has deserted our partners, emboldened three of our chief adversaries, provided a lifeline to ISIS fighters who have been taken off the battlefield, and put American troops and America in harm’s way. Truly, this is one of the most thoughtless and dangerous policy changes that President Trump could have made. That it was made seemingly on a whim—without consulting our military commanders, without notifying Congress, and, most egregiously, without thinking its consequences through—makes it even more alarming.

We have entered a dangerous moment, my friends. It is increasingly clear to everyone that the President’s erratic decision making has endangered our national security and the security of our partners and allies around the world. Strong sanctions, while good and justified, will not be sufficient in undoing that damage, nor will they stop the consequences stemming from the ISIS jailbreak.

So the first step, as Congress returns, is for Democrats and Republicans to join us in passing a resolution making clear that both parties demand that the President’s decision be reversed.

This is bipartisan, but our Republican colleagues have a special place here because they will have far more success in getting the President to reverse course and change his views. There is a solemn obligation on every one of the 53 Republican Members here.

They know it is dangerous. Are they going to still be afraid to criticize President Trump? They have not, so far, but this resolution is the strongest action we can take.

Ultimately, of course, the only person able to immediately stop this tragedy from unfolding is the President himself. The President made the decision alone. He alone is responsible for its consequences. President Trump, hopefully, importuned by Congress, Democrats and Republicans in the House and Senate, will use this moment—must use this moment—to step

up, admit his grave mistake, and correct course.

I yield the floor.

#### 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 and resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Barbara McConnell Barrett, of Arizona, to be Secretary of the Air Force.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

#### WHISTLEBLOWERS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, we have heard a lot about whistleblowers in the past several weeks. There has been an outpouring of concern for whistleblowers ever since word came out that there was a whistleblower complaint that implicates the current administration.

A lot of those on the other side of the aisle, expressing support for whistleblowers, to the best of my recollection, haven’t expressed the same level of concern for whistleblowers in the last administration.

Well, welcome to the table. I hope you stay at the table quite a while.

I have said for years that it is critical that we protect the whistleblower process to incentivize the disclosure of true waste, fraud, and abuse of the taxpayer’s money. Those processes must be carefully followed by all whistleblowers, and that process must be respected by our government’s institutions. Those legal processes are especially important for government employees who work in the intelligence field. Whistleblowers who act in good faith, who comply with the disclosure process set out by law, and who report their concerns through proper channels deserve to be heard and deserve to be protected.

I have also said that first-, second-, and third-hand information doesn’t make or break a whistleblower. If they follow the procedure, that is really most important. However, hearsay is a factor to take into account when analyzing the strength of underlying alle-

gations. Clearly, first-hand knowledge is much more powerful than second- and third-hand knowledge. That is just common sense.

It is common sense no matter what the allegations are or who the subject is, and there needs to be a consistent approach in the way that Congress conducts oversight. On April 8 of this year, I spoke on this Senate floor about the need for consistent oversight. I pointed out clear double standards between what the Democrats are doing to the Trump administration and the blind eye that they have used on any fact pattern that might damage their political narrative.

Let me remind the Democrats that I threatened to subpoena the President’s son and that my staff later deposed that son. In fact, I investigated alleged Russian collusion with the Trump campaign and interviewed more than 10 people connected to the June 2016 famous Trump Tower meeting, many of them Trump campaign officials. By the way, I also welcomed Democrats’ participation in those interviews. The Democrats did participate. But, unfortunately, the same equal access and transparency doesn’t exist in the House of Representatives these days as they do oversight of what has gone on with the famous telephone call to the Ukrainian President.

I have routinely challenged the administration’s policies and engaged in robust oversight to hold this administration accountable. My oversight and investigation units have sent out almost 300 letters to the executive branch since President Trump took his oath of office. So I think I can declare myself an equal-opportunity overseer because I seek facts, irrespective of party and no matter where they lead.

I don’t think many of the Democrats today can say the same thing. These folks today, who are suddenly so concerned about congressional oversight, are the same ones who had no interest whatsoever in defending the institutions of the legislative branch when the Obama administration was in office.

Quite frankly, I find it all too convenient that the Democrats today have used allegations of wrongdoing against the President that actually apply much more clearly to their own political leaders. Let us begin down this road with the now-debunked Russia collusion investigation.

First, the Clinton campaign hired Fusion GPS to do opposition research against candidate Trump. Second, the Democratic National Committee did the very same thing. Third, Fusion GPS hired Christopher Steele, a former British intelligence officer, to compile the famous Steele dossier.

Even James Comey, a former FBI Director, a man who leaked sensitive government records to spark a special counsel investigation, called that Steele dossier “salacious and unverified.” That same Steele dossier factored heavily in the FBI’s investigation against Trump.