

both sides of the Capitol in expressing our grief and sadness at the passing of our House colleague, Chairman ELIJAH CUMMINGS.

In his over more than two decades in the House of Representatives, CUMMINGS became a living legend in his native Baltimore. By all accounts, he was a powerful and passionate voice on the national stage and was a strong advocate for his neighbors, his district, and his values. He counted close friends and admirers from all across the political spectrum.

The Capitol will lower its flags today to mark this significant loss and remember a life well lived. The Senate unites our prayers with those in the House for Maya, ELIJAH's wife; for his children; and for all of the colleagues, friends, and staff who will miss him greatly.

TURKEY AND SYRIA

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, on an entirely different matter, I was encouraged to see yesterday's display of bipartisan concern in the House of Representatives for sustaining America's global leadership and, specifically, over the damaging impact of hastily withdrawing that leadership from Syria.

Back in January, I led a forward-looking debate here in the Senate on these very issues. I sponsored an amendment to S. 1 that earned the support of a bipartisan supermajority—70 Senators. We went on the record as opposing a premature exit from Syria or Afghanistan and emphasized the need for sustained American leadership in the fight against terrorism.

I was disappointed when a number of leading Democrats, including my counterpart, the Democratic leader, and most of our colleagues who are running for President, voted against this bipartisan consensus, but, overall, a huge majority of the Senate spoke up strongly.

I know many of us are keen on engaging in these important issues further in light of recent events. As the Senate debates our Middle East policy and contemplates what action to take, I believe it is important that we make a strong, forward-looking, strategic statement.

For that reason, my preference would be for something even stronger than the resolution the House passed yesterday, which has some serious weaknesses. It is so narrowly drafted that it fails to address the plight of imperiled Sunni Arab and minority Christian communities in Syria. It is backward-looking, and it is curiously silent on the issue of whether to actually sustain a U.S. military presence in Syria, perhaps to spare the Democrats from having to go on the record on this key question.

So my first preference is for something stronger than the House resolution. I look forward to continuing to engage with my colleagues on both

sides of the aisle as we chart the right course, and I expect many of us will have much more to say on the subject very soon.

S.J. RES. 53

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, on one final matter, this week, I have been discussing how Washington Democrats have sought for 3 years to effectively nullify the Trump Presidency. They have tried to cancel out the voters' decision in 2016 and dodge the consequences of Secretary Clinton's defeat whether it be through the 3-year-old impeachment parade that the House Democrats have been leading or through the unprecedented delays and obstruction that has been visited on the President's nominations here in the Senate.

Well, our Democratic colleagues will today mount yet another effort to fire up the time machine. They want to move forward with legislation that would undo a major regulatory reform success story of the Trump administration's and reopen the Obama administration's disastrous War on Coal. Specifically, they want to try and revive the so-called Clean Power Plan, which is a dangerous, misguided policy that the Trump administration has rightly done away with. We will be voting on this resolution later today.

The basic facts haven't changed since this job-killing scheme was first put forward back in 2014. This relic of the Obama administration would have further buried the producers of affordable American energy under a mountain of stifling redtape. It would have created overlapping local, State, and Federal standards, unrealistic compliance deadlines, and would have set up a Washington bureaucracy that would effectively root for American energy to fail. It is no wonder, by one analysis, that 125,000 jobs would have been on the chopping block had President Obama gotten his way.

The workers in my State know better than anyone the true costs of the last administration's misguided War on Coal. Kentucky workers know what happens when plants that create jobs and generate affordable electricity at the same time are simply shut down.

That is why I have been proud to lead the fight in ending the regulatory War on Coal. It is why I wrote every Governor in the country in 2015 and raised my concerns about the Obama administration's dangerous Clean Power Plan scheme, because, even today, nearly 3 years into an administration that is not at war with American energy, Kentucky miners continue to feel the effects of the previous administration's policies.

We also know that the full effects of the Clean Power Plan would have stretched far beyond coal country. The ripples of this harmful proposal would have been felt across the country by Americans in paying their power bills.

One independent report predicted that consumers in 40 States, including

Kentucky, would have seen double-digit percentage increases in their electricity costs, and by the Obama officials' own admissions, the proposal would have hit low-income and minority communities the hardest. Let me say that again: Low-income and minority populations would have been hit the hardest by the double-digit electricity bill increases in four out of every five States. That is quite a rap sheet for a Federal policy.

In a nation in which carbon emissions have already been trending downward, this proposal would have sold off our economic edge to overseas competitors whose emissions are, actually, steadily climbing. It would have taken the legs out from under American job creators while some of the world's leading polluters would have continued to roar right past us. It would have literally shipped our economic competitiveness to places like China and India.

Here is how experts estimated the effect of all of this self-inflicted economic damage on the climate: a one one-hundredth-of-1-degree difference by 2050. Here is the impact estimated to have happened if it had gone forward—a one one-hundredth-of-1-degree difference by 2050. Think how deeply you would have to be in the grip of leftwing ideology for that trade-off to sound like a good deal for American families.

Today's effort to revive this bad policy is being pushed by the same Senate Democrats who, overwhelmingly, could not bring themselves to vote against something as absurd as the Green New Deal back in March. Unfortunately, we know there is a considerable appetite among Democrats to inflict huge economic harm on American workers and American families just so we can better comply with this new green religion.

But here is the good news for my constituents in Kentucky and for hard-working Americans across the Nation: Senate Republicans are on the case, and we will not let far-left fashions take precedence over the common good of our country.

The American people have elected an administration and a Senate majority that trusts workers and job creators, not Washington bureaucracies. We have spent years cleaning up the mess of overregulation that the Obama era has left behind, and we will continue to stop the Democrats from reenacting that damaging history.

So I would urge all of my colleagues to join with us today and oppose these efforts to nullify a Presidency and take us backward.

Let's vote to keep this ill-conceived, leftwing policy on the shelf, where it belongs.

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S.J. RES. 58 AND H.J. RES. 77

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I understand there are two bills at the desk due a second reading en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read the titles of the bills for the second time en bloc.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S.J. Res. 58) expressing support for freedom of conscience.

A resolution (H.J. Res. 77) opposing the decision to end certain United States efforts to prevent Turkish military operations against Syrian Kurdish forces in Northeast Syria.

Mr. MCCONNELL. In order to place the bills on the calendar under the provision of rule XIV, I object to further proceedings en bloc.

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

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

REMEMBERING ELIJAH CUMMINGS

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, we woke up this morning to learn with profound sadness that our friend and colleague Congressman ELIJAH CUMMINGS, the son of sharecroppers who became the chair of the House Oversight Committee, passed away last night at the age of 68.

It was the first thing I saw when I read the paper this morning, and it hit me like a punch in the stomach.

In his 23 years in Congress, ELIJAH amassed a legacy that will live on long after his sudden passing. He served the people of his Maryland district with selflessness, passion, and grace.

Since it only happened this morning, I can't do justice to the legacy of ELIJAH CUMMINGS, but I would like to share a few reflections, and I know that my dear friend Senator CARDIN was close like this—like brothers—with ELIJAH CUMMINGS, and they had worked together on so many things for Maryland and the country. I know he is here sharing our deep sadness.

Now, truly, ELIJAH CUMMINGS was not just a great Congressman. He was a great man. He had a presence—a commanding presence—when he entered the room, and he could be strong when he had to be, and he had to be strong quite often. But he also was always kind and decent and caring and honorable.

It is a rare combination, that inner strength and that decency and that kindness. ELIJAH had it. If we had lived in happier times, maybe the public would have seen this kind side more

often, but ELIJAH was never one to shrink from the moment.

I talked to him frequently. We would talk about the goings-on in the House or the Senate or the political trivia of the day. Sometimes we would talk about Maryland politics. He was an expert.

ELIJAH was revered by his constituents and indeed by the entire State of Maryland. Liberal or conservative, Democrat or Republican, Black or White, you went to ELIJAH CUMMINGS for advice. His loss is an enormous one for his constituents, for his staff and, above all, his family. I pray for them this morning, as I pray for our country when people like ELIJAH CUMMINGS of the world are no longer with us.

TURKEY AND SYRIA

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, on Syria, yesterday, the U.S. military carried out airstrikes to destroy what only a few weeks ago had been the headquarters of the American campaign to destroy ISIS in Syria. Nothing encapsulates the failure of President Trump's decision to stand aside for Erdogan more than the fact that we are now bombing our own bases rather than allow them to fall into the hands of Assad, Erdogan, or Putin.

If Erdogan, Putin, and Assad are such great allies or no problem, as President Trump told us yesterday at the White House, then why do we have to bomb our own headquarters after American troops evacuated so it doesn't fall into Syrian or Turkish or even Russian hands? That one thing encapsulates the absurdity, the awfulness of President Trump's lack of policy and erratic, impulsive, and whimsical movements on the Syrian front.

Yesterday the President said this withdrawal was a "strategic move." It certainly is not that because this is not the action of a military that carried out a deliberate withdrawal. It is the action of a military that was given a fly-by-the-seat-of-his-pants decision of the President contrary to the recommendations of the commanders on the ground.

Donald Trump has the nerve, the gall, to think he knows more about the military than these generals who have served our country for decades. It is appalling. How does America put up with this? How do our Republican colleagues put up with this? He doesn't consult the generals. What a blunder, and it seems to be the result of the President's inability to say no to dictators. He seems to like a Putin and an Erdogan and even a Kim more than our allies. This is also a clear demonstration of the President's fecklessness and recklessness, both, or as my colleague Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM, and one of the President's staunchest allies in Congress, said, "I fear that this is a complete and utter national security disaster in the making."

Yesterday afternoon, congressional leaders went to the White House, at its

request, to meet with the President about the rapid disintegration of the situation in northern Syria. Speaker PELOSI and I talked about it ahead of time, and we talked about it with Senators REED and MENENDEZ as well. We had a serious purpose: to find out if the President actually had a plan to contain ISIS and fix the mess precipitated by his decision to green-light Erdogan's military incursion into Syria.

Alarming—alarming—President Trump had no plan. The greatest insult that occurred in that room was not any of the name-calling that Trump did. A far greater insult to America, to all of us, was the lack of any policy guidance, any policy decisions, any direction from the President and his top national security advisers on how to contain ISIS.

I reminded the President that as two New Yorkers, we probably knew better than most the damage a small band of terrorists can do, even from a half a world away. I asked: What is your plan to prevent ISIS from regrouping and resurging? He didn't have one. Secretary of Defense Mark Esper didn't have a plan.

After we pushed them and pushed them, I said: Who is going to take care of all these prisoners? The President said there were 70,000 ISIS prisoners and their families. Who is going to take care of them, make sure they don't escape, as some have already?

They finally said: Well, the Syrians and the Turks will do that. So I asked the group if they had any intelligence or assurances that the Turks and Syrians would do a decent job. Secretary Esper himself said there was no evidence of that.

This is amazing. Terrorists whom we have spent a decade fighting—we have spent billions of dollars and lost lives to fight them—are finally in prison. The Kurds are guarding them. The Kurds are leaving, understandably, because they have to fight the Turks now. What is the plan? There isn't any, except to rely on Syrians, Turks, who have not even close to the interest we have in curbing ISIS.

Assad is much more interested in gaining back his Syrian homeland. Erdogan is focused on hurting the Kurds, whom he is fanatically against. So they are not going to pay much attention to ISIS.

It was appalling, just appalling. President Trump has stepped aside for Putin, Assad, and Erdogan. Our allies, the Kurds, are being slaughtered as a result of our betrayal. Most importantly, as Secretary Mattis said, "if we don't keep the pressure on [in Syria], ISIS will resurge. It's absolutely a given that they will come back."

The President didn't like hearing Mattis's words, but all of America should. He is one of the most respected military minds, one of the most respected leaders on both sides of the aisle—liberals, Independents, conservatives. Here is what he said, again repeating: