fact, I am here to do the exact opposite—to remind the Senate that prejudging the case is not our job. That would overstep long-established boundaries and weaken our system of checks and balances. Lately, though, some of our Republican colleagues have attacked the NLRB and have tried to poison the decisionmaking process. They are interfering with the case pending before a legal body. For example, every Republican Senator on the HELP Committee—and let's remind everyone, the ''l'' in HELP stands for ''labor''—sent a letter to the Acting General Counsel defending Boeing. The letter itself, sent 6 weeks before a hearing even takes place, seems questionable at the very best, but these 10 Republicans went further. They went out of their way to link their request to the Acting General Counsel's pending nomination. If there were ever a case of intimidation, that sounds like it to me. But that is not all. Eight State attorneys general—all Republicans—also signed a letter to the Acting General Counsel calling on him to withdraw the complaint against Boeing—again, long before an administrative judge has had the opportunity to even look at the case, let alone review the case.

I strongly encourage all of them to take a step back, my Republican colleagues on the HELP Committee and these attorneys general. We all know Republicans dislike organized labor. We know they disdain unions because unions demand fairness and equality from the big businesses Republicans so often shield at all costs. So let's be honest—Republicans are threatened by unions. They are threatened because when a large organized group is so concerned with workers' rights, the members of that group vote in large numbers. And because Republicans and the big businesses they defend so often try to take away workers' rights, workers don't often vote Republican.

This kind of interference is inappropriate, it is disgraceful and dangerous. We wouldn't allow threats to prosecutors or U.S. attorneys trying to stop them from moving forward with charges they see fit to bring to the courts, and we shouldn't stand for this. It may not be illegal, but it is no better than the retaliation and intimidation that is the fundamental question in this case, and it should stop.

We need agencies such as the NLRB to be able to operate freely and without political pressures. We need to keep our independent agencies independent. This case is for them to decide, not for us to decide.

Would the Chair now announce morning business.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business for debate only until 2 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the first hour equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the Republicans controlling the first 30 minutes and the majority controlling the next 30 minutes.

The majority leader.

Mr. REID. I note the absence of a quorum, and I ask unanimous consent that the time run equally.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The minority leader.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The minority leader is recognized.

ENERGY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, yesterday Democrats unveiled yet another attempt to slow American energy production, this time through a tax hike on American energy. They acknowledge, however, that this will not lower the price of gas, and they are right.

The Congressional Research Service tells us that raising taxes on American energy will do two things: It will increase the price of gas, and it will increase our dependence on foreign competitors. By taxing American energy production, they are also outsourcing American jobs. So let me get this straight: higher gas prices, fewer American jobs, and more dependence on foreign competitors at the expense of American energy? That is their plan? No thank you.

DRAFT EXECUTIVE ORDER

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I was happy to see the No. 2 Democrat in the House yesterday take a stand against the President's proposed Executive order, a proposal disguised as increased ''transparency,'' which would allow the administration to review a company's political donations before deciding whether to award a Federal contract. That is right; the administration would be able to review a company's political donations before deciding whether to give them a Federal contract.

Here is how he put it: This is the No. 2 Democrat in the House:

> [The] White House plan to require federal contractors to disclose political contributions could politicize the bidding process and undermine its integrity.

Similar efforts have already been rejected by the Supreme Court, the Federal Election Commission, and the Congress during the last session of the Congress. Now there is bipartisan opposition to the administration's Executive order.

The White House is spinning this as ''reform,'' claiming the American people deserve to know how taxpayer money is being used by contractors. However, the proposed Executive order would exclude Democratic allies, including Federal employee labor unions, environmental groups, and, of course, Planned Parenthood.

As I have said, no White House—no White House—should be able to review a contractor's political party affiliation before deciding if they are worthy—worthy—of a government contract. No one should have to worry about whether their political support will determine their ability to get or to keep a Federal contract or to keep a job.

The issuing of contracts by the Federal Government should be based on the contractor's merits, bids, and capabilities. Under no condition—no condition—should political contributions play a role in that decision. However, the White House draft Executive order makes it crystal clear that if a contractor wants to do business with the government—if they want to do business with the government—they cannot contribute to the Republicans.

As Senator COLLINS recently pointed out, this Executive order would basically repeal the Hatch Act and inject politics back into the procurement process. This is simply unacceptable.

Democracy is compromised when individuals and small businesses fear reprisal or expect favor from the Federal Government as a result of their political associations. So the recent press reports about this unprecedented Executive order raise troubling concerns about an effort to silence or intimidate political adversaries' speech through the government contracting system.

The White House still has an opportunity to not go forward with this order, and you can rest assured we will be watching very closely because the proposed effort would represent an outrageous—a truly outrageous—and antidemocratic abuse of executive branch authority.

It is my sincere hope that the recent reports of the draft Executive order were simply the work of a partisan within the administration and not the position taken by the President himself. He should state his position.

Mr. President, we are waiting for your response.

Madam President, I yield the floor.