

forward to joining my colleagues in finally passing this bill later today.

JANUARY 6

Now, Mr. President, on January 6, this morning, the Senate's Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, in partnership with the Rules Committee, released a joint report related to the aspects of the tragedy of January 6.

I particularly salute Chairs PETERS and KLOBUCHAR for the good work they have done with their ranking members.

The report drew a few notable conclusions, especially with respect to the failures in intelligence gathering and communication that took place on and before January 6, but just as glaring as what the report didn't consider is, indeed, what it was not allowed to consider. The report did not investigate, report on, or hardly make any reference to the actual cause, the actual impetus, for the attack on January 6.

With the exception of a brief reference to former President Trump's remarks at the Ellipse, Senate Republicans insisted that the report exclude anything having to do with the cause of the insurrection.

If anything, the joint report by the Homeland Security and Rules Committees has strengthened the argument for an independent commission on January 6.

We had a perfect opportunity to establish such a Commission at the end of last session before Republicans mounted a partisan filibuster against it, despite the fact that the Democrats worked with Republicans for weeks in the House and Senate to construct a Commission that was bipartisan, focused, straight down the middle; despite the fact that Speaker PELOSI acceded to every major request made by House Republicans about the structure of the commission; and despite the fact that, here in the Senate, I supported the changes proposed by my colleague Senator COLLINS.

As the Big Lie continues to spread, as faith in our elections continues to decline, it is crucial—crucial—we establish a trusted, independent record of what transpired on January 6 and what caused it.

So I reserve the right to bring legislation for an independent, bipartisan Commission to the Senate floor for another vote.

PAYCHECK FAIRNESS

Mr. President, now, on paycheck fairness, finally, this week the Senate will vote on whether to take up legislation that would provide equal pay for women in America.

We have been talking about the wage gap for years now, with no action taken by the Senate.

Women with the same jobs, the same degrees, sometimes even better degrees than their male colleagues, are making less money. For women of color, the gap between them and their male counterparts is even wider.

This is a fundamental issue of fairness, and we have a very simple, com-

monsense legislative proposal to address the issue. But yesterday, the Republican leader said Democrats' attempts to bring this issue up for a debate was "transparently designed to fail." He went on to say that issues like gun safety and pay equity were merely "demands of [our] radical base."

Look, the only way that a bill to provide equal pay for women is designed to fail is if Senate Republicans block it. And if the Republican leader wants to talk about "radical" positions, I would say that opposing legislation to provide equal pay for women, supported by a solid majority of voters, is a radical position. Does he believe that?

You know what is radical? Opposing legislation to expand background checks to prevent felons and the mentally ill from getting a gun. More than 90 percent—90 percent—of Americans support that policy. But Republicans have, in the past, opposed it. That is truly a radical position.

You know what else is radical? Opposing a bipartisan, independent Commission to report on a violent mob that attacked this Capitol. Spreading doubt about the veracity of our elections. That is radical and, in my opinion, despicable. It gnaws at the very roots of this grand democracy. And we hear either encouragement or acquiescence from the other side when President Trump and his minions do this.

You know what else is radical? Passing laws that specifically make it harder for younger, poorer, and non-White Americans to vote. That is truly radical and dangerous. It is against the whole grain of progress we have made in America. Remembering that when the Constitution was passed, the vast majority of us in this Chamber, not the vast majority but probably the majority—I haven't counted—would have to be White, male, Protestant property owners to vote, we have made progress. They want to take a giant step back for pure electoral gain. Radical. That is radical.

So we are going to have a vote on paycheck fairness this week. The first vote is not even a vote on the bill; it is just a vote on whether to take it up for debate. We will see if our Republican colleagues take the radical step of blocking the Senate from even debating equal pay for women.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, 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 Republican leader is recognized.

ENDLESS FRONTIER ACT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, today the Senate will wrap up consideration of a broad bipartisan effort to update our approach to competition with China. This bill has accelerated an important conversation on a topic we all know deserves our full attention. From critical supply chains to intellectual property, to counter-espionage, it touches on key issues that will help determine our strategic footing for decades.

That is why an overwhelming majority of us, myself included, voted to proceed to the measure here on the floor, not because the bill was already perfect. In fact, as the ranking member of the Commerce Committee noted when it was reported out, the legislation was "not ready for prime time."

Rather, we took it up precisely because it deserved robust debate and amendment. So I was glad that several of our colleagues were allowed to offer substantial revisions here on the floor. In particular, I am glad the Democratic leader thought better of blocking Chairman WYDEN and Ranking Member CRAPO from including their bipartisan provision on combating illicit trade practices.

But I was disappointed that he proceeded with an effort to end this important debate without allowing the Senate to consider a number of other outstanding Republican amendments.

There is no practical reason our consideration of this important issue should have to compete for sufficient space on the Democrats' dance card.

We are talking about making America more competitive with its biggest and fastest growing rival. If any issue demands thorough, exhaustive debate, it is this one.

Unfortunately, the final bill we will be voting on today will remain incomplete. It includes several smart, targeted measures but leaves many more on the table. And so it will advance as an imperfect approach to an extremely consequential challenge.

One thing this legislation did demonstrate extremely well, however, was that the rules of the Senate don't stand in the way of bipartisan legislating.

Needless to say, final passage of this legislation cannot be the Senate's final word—final word on our competition with China. It certainly won't be mine. As I have warned repeatedly, soft power is only as strong as the hard power underpinning it.

The Chinese Communist Party doesn't hesitate in investing the proceeds of its predatory trade practices and influence campaigns directly into modernizing its hard power arsenal.

Over the past two decades, defense spending in Beijing has increased astronomically. Meanwhile, the Biden administration's proposal for defense spending puts forward such a meager—meager—year-on-year increase, it fails to keep pace with inflation, let alone with our rivals.

The White House request would degrade our ability to project power