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OUR VIEW: TARIFFS

Trump leading U.S. into a perilous battle

For a man who touts his deal-making ability and business acumen, President Trump continues to show ineptness in the basics of world trade's importance to the economy.

As trade negotiations with China broke off the president raised tariffs on an additional \$200 billion worth of Chinese exports. Then, in a naive statement, the administration said China should not retaliate with similar tariffs against the United States. Trump followed up with the erroneous view that America will reap a multibillion-dollar, one-way payment of tariffs from China to the U.S. Treasury.

Why it matters:

President Trump's bungling of trade issues shows a lack of basic economics and will cost farmers and consumers.

Even his own chief economic adviser, Larry Kudlow, had to take to Sunday news shows to confirm that U.S. consumers will bear much of the cost of Trump's tariffs.

Much or all of the 25 percent tax on goods imported from China will be paid by American companies who will have to pass that cost on to consumers when they sell them shoes, electronics, chemicals and other goods.

"Trump is dragging a dangerous misconception into a critical moment in his standoff with the Chinese," Chad Bown, a trade expert at the Peterson Institute for International Economics, told the New York Times. "And American businesses and consumers stand to pay the price."

As trade talks with China crumble the president's trade deal with Canada and Mexico is stalled in Congress, coming under fire from high ranking members of both political parties.

While all consumers in the Mankato region will begin paying for Trump's tariffs, the economically vital agriculture economy will be especially victimized.

Farmers producing crops and livestock are already being stung by a big loss of trade with China and Mexico, as the prices for their products free fall. But those farmers are also consumers who will be paying the new Trump taxes on imported materials used to make everything from farm machinery to household items.

Trump responded to the growing farm crisis by saying he has directed Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue to buy \$15 billion worth of agriculture products and send them to "poor & starving countries" for humanitarian aid.

Ag economists and farm groups point out that such plans have been tried before with minimal success. And experts note that it would be impractical to ship massive amounts of grain and other farm products to poor countries that lack the ports, transportation systems and processing facilities to handle it.

As Trump races toward lasting economic damage with his befuddling trade theories, it's time for Congressional Republicans — who have allowed the president to run roughshod over the Constitution, American institutions and political traditions — to challenge Trump on his misguided efforts.

OTHER VIEW

Unclear on nuclear

New York Daily News

Though this page found little to like in President Obama's foreign policy, we appreciated one credo: "Don't do stupid s-t." Today, America's role in the world is motivated more by presidential ego rather than by sound security strategy. As the U.S.'s approach to two nuclear states shows, that's stupid, and it's dangerous.

First, Iran. President Trump inherited a deeply imperfect deal, the JCPOA, designed to box in Tehran's nuclear ambitions. We railed against that agreement — but understand that it is better to have some controls in place to constrain a hostile state's nuclear ambitions than to have none.

Despite no evidence of Tehran having breached its obligations, Trump kissed the JCPOA goodbye with

no alternative in place. Now, the U.S. inches toward outright hostilities with one of the Middle East's leading military powers in the name of halting the acquisition of nukes which could have been far more effectively prevented by the deal itself.

If a rogue regime like Iran inherently can't be trusted, by what logic is Trump continuing to romance the totalitarian Kim Jong Un?

Trump praises Kim to the heavens, going so far as to say they are "in love." Kim shows no interest in stepping away from his nuclear program. In recent weeks, North Korea launched its first two missile test in over a year; Trump shrugged.

Trump's best-case scenario is getting Kim to ink an exhaustive, detailed, multi-nation deal similar to the one with Tehran he discarded. So what's really going on here?

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SHENEMAN THE STAR-LEDGER



McConnell's Senate makes judges, not laws

By Jonathan Bernstein
Bloomberg News

Mitch McConnell's Senate has almost completely given up on legislation.

On Thursday, the Senate took one vote: to confirm a judge. On Wednesday, the chamber took seven votes: All were on cloture and final confirmation for another judge and for three executive branch nominees. Three votes on Tuesday? More of the same. And a single vote on Monday was on cloture for a judge who was then confirmed on Tuesday. That's 12 votes for the week, none of them on legislation.

In fact, since April 2, the Senate has taken 50 votes, and all but one of them — the failed veto override on the Yemen resolution — were on nominations or the nomination process. And before that, beginning with the final vote on Feb. 12 and going through April 1, there were only 10 legislative votes (out of 23 total votes). So that's only 11 legislative votes over three months.

To be fair, a handful of measures have passed without a recorded vote over that period. S.693, the National POW/MIA Flag Act, went through by unanimous consent on May 2. H.R. 1222, the Target Practice and Marksmanship Training Support Act, did the same on April 30. So if a bill is insignificant enough and no one objects, the Senate is still capable of acting on it.

But still, this is a truly disgraceful record. And no, it's not because Republicans are conservatives and don't think there are any laws that need to be passed. As far as I know,

all of them think disaster relief, for example, is needed, but they aren't reaching a deal on it because Donald Trump doesn't want Puerto Rico to get any money and Republican Senators don't know how to get around Trump's rhetoric. Plenty of Republicans have campaigned on other laws they wanted passed. None of it is happening now.

To compare, the House — which of course has no nomination responsibilities — has worked through plenty of bills. The lower chamber has also taken about 50 votes since the beginning of April, but (other than a few procedural items) they're all legislative.

Perhaps a better comparison, however, would be the Senate in 2011. The partisan context is the same: A continuing Senate majority with its party in the Oval Office, while the out party had a new majority in the House. The Senate that year took only 19 votes from the beginning of April through the first week of May — but all but four were legislative. Senators even took recorded votes on eight amendments to two bills over that period. This year? It's been almost two months since the last recorded vote on an amendment, and I count a total of eight votes on seven amendments all year so far.

In other words, Mitch McConnell has taken one of the world's great legislative bodies and turned it into a chamber for processing nominations. I've talked about the post-policy Republican Party — a party that doesn't even bother to pretend to have solutions for anything — but this is taking it to an extreme. And I single out McConnell because he's the majority

leader and therefore the senator most responsible for what is being considered on the Senate floor, but there's no reason to believe that any of the other 52 Republicans has any problem at all with how he's handling his job.

I should mention that part of the reason for the failure to consider legislation on the Senate floor is that Democrats have been blocking by filibuster attempts to bring up some bills.

However, in doing so Democrats are simply doing to McConnell what he did to them when they were in the majority. And part of the reason they are doing so is because McConnell would block them from offering their amendments if they allowed bills to be considered. At any rate, I'd count any attempts to bring up bills as legislative votes, but McConnell hasn't bothered trying.

Of course all of this comes after Republicans passed a major tax bill and very little else during two years of unified government, so it's not as if they've exhausted a long agenda. For that matter, a few weeks ago when Trump suggested that the Senate might move forward on health care, Republicans reacted as if he had thrown a grenade into their conference room. What, us legislate? And the same is true of Trump requests for immigration legislation, and, well, everything else.

It's a disgrace.
Jonathan Bernstein is a Bloomberg Opinion columnist covering politics and policy. He taught political science at the University of Texas at San Antonio and DePauw University and wrote A Plain Blog About Politics.

People are dying for nothing

"You don't have to be the hero." That, John Castillo told NBC News Wednesday, is something he had advised his 18-year-old son, Kendrick. If ever a shooter invades your school, son, don't try to confront him, don't take the risk. But Castillo said Kendrick had other ideas, telling his dad that he would not hesitate to defend other people's lives.

As the world now knows, Kendrick was as good as his word. When two of the latest in this country's seemingly endless line of armed maniacs descended upon the STEM Schools Highland Ranch near Denver, witnesses say Kendrick rushed him. Some other boys managed to disarm him. In the melee, one of the students, Joshua Jones, was wounded. And Kendrick was killed.

The young man whose father told him not to be a hero became exactly that. But he never should've had to. That goes also for Riley Howell, a 21-year-old student who died seven days before Kendrick, tackling a gunman in a classroom at the University of North Carolina Charlotte. And it goes for 60-year-old Lori Gilbert-Kaye, shot and killed 10 days before when she stood between her rabbi and a gunman at a synagogue near San Diego.

All of them heroes, yes. But in a

saner nation, they might not have had to be. Indeed, in a saner nation, they might still be alive.



LEONARD PITTS
Miami Herald

"Don't blame the gun." That's what gun-rights advocates always say in moments like this. And OK, fair enough. Let's not blame the gun.

But can we not blame this nation's insistence on easy and unfettered access to the gun? Might that not have the tiniest bit to do with the fact that gun violence is rampant

here? Instead of dealing with that causality, gun people ask us to take gun violence as some immutable fact of life, some intrinsic component of freedom. That's nonsense, but it's nonsense they have to embrace because to do otherwise is to face an untenable truth.

People are dying for nothing. For some fantasy of rugged self-reliance. For some shortcut to macho. For some terror of the dark Other standing at the bedroom window.

For nothing.
"There is no reason why on the street today a citizen should be carrying loaded weapons." So said no less towering an icon of conservatism than Ronald Reagan. Of course, he said it in 1967, before conservatism lost its mind — before Florida gave guns to teachers and Iowa gave them to the blind, before cause divorced effect and

reason became an anachronism, before 6 year olds developed PTSD and mass murder became normal.

If it is true, as Martin Luther King once said, that, "No lie can live forever," then there must eventually come a day when we face the truth of what we have allowed. One wonders what the death toll will be by then.

Meantime, in place of truth we have heroes. Their selflessness and sacrifice, their willingness to do what must be done, whatever the cost, rightfully inspire us.

But they diminish us, too. Because, inadvertently highlighted in the reflected glow of their sacrifice is the bitter truth of how pusillanimous, how cowardly, how chickenhearted, is the nation that required sacrifice of them to begin with, the nation that lets people die for nothing because it cannot muster the moral fortitude to restrain its own carnage.

In Denver, they held a vigil for Kendrick Castillo. Riley Howell, an ROTC cadet, was buried with military honors. An overflow crowd paid tribute to Lori Gilbert-Kaye. And it is well and fitting that we do such things. But there is a better way to honor these martyrs' courage.

By finding some of our own.
Leonard Pitts is a columnist for The Miami Herald, 1 Herald Plaza, Miami, Fla., 33132. Readers may contact him via e-mail at lpittsmiami-herald.com.