not ours, but we must make clear that our disagreements are not with them but with Vladimir Putin and his corrupt, autocratic regime.

Defending our elections isn't just about strong cyber measures, protecting the ballot box, and promoting better practices on social media. It is about having a foreign policy that clearly communicates our values and interests, one that leaves no room for debate over the openness of any American President to foreign interference. It is about a foreign policy that recognizes how the Kremlin's efforts to weaken democracy in Ukraine or in other European countries ultimately threatens democracy here in the United States. It is about a foreign policy that works with allies and partners, not one that denigrates them at every turn.

The intelligence community is getting better at detecting and guarding against interference, but we must remain vigilant. Russia and other foreign actors will continue to attack our democratic process. Their tactics may evolve, but their intentions remain the same, and we need to stay one step ahead of them.

The Biden administration is off to a good start in defending our democracy. As chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, I look forward to working together to advance policies that reflect America's time-honored democratic values both at him and abroad.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY

Madam President, parliamentary inquiry: Is there a time limit that we are in the midst of?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. We are in postcloture on the Becerra nomination. Each Senator has up to 1 hour.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Further parliamentary inquiry: Is there a limit on time divided by side or is the floor open regardless?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The floor is open to any Senator who seeks recognition.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Thank you.

NOMINATION OF XAVIER BECERRA

Madam President, just switching very briefly, I want to urge my colleagues to join me in support of the nomination of Xavier Becerra to serve as Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

I consider Mr. Becerra a friend. I had the privilege of serving with him in the House of Representatives. In fact, we both came to Congress at the same time, a time, I might add, when there were far fewer Latinos elected to Federal office than we have today.

As a member of the Ways and Means Subcommittee on Health, Mr. Becerra frequently spoke up for the many Americans left behind by our healthcare system: seniors facing sky-high prescription drug bills, patients with preexisting conditions, children, and the working poor.

Furthermore, he played an active role in the effort to pass the Affordable Care Act, a landmark law that since 2010 has changed the lives of millions of Americans in New Jersey and across the Nation for the better.

As California's attorney general, no one has fought harder to protect the Affordable Care Act than Xavier Becerra. And if confirmed to this position, no one will work harder to protect and improve access to healthcare than he will.

As the first Secretary of Health and Human Services of Latino descent, I know that Mr. Becerra will focus a great deal on addressing the health disparities that are harming so many lower income and minority communities nationwide, disparities we saw played out over the past year as COVID–19 claimed a disproportionate number of Black and Brown lives.

Mr. Becerra will also work to undo the damage wrought by the Trump administration to our healthcare system, from weakening nursing home standards that left seniors more vulnerable in this pandemic to allowing health insurers to, once again, sell shoddy, skimpy plans to consumers that failed to protect them from massive medical bills.

And, finally, I want to address some of the criticisms I have heard from my colleagues on the other side of the aisle regarding Mr. Becerra's qualifications. The notion that Mr. Becerra has no managerial experience is laughable, given that as California's attorney general, he has successfully led the second largest Justice Department in the Nation, second only to the U.S. Department of Justice.

And it is not lost on me that those questioning Mr. Becerra's credentials are the very same colleagues who claim that Congressman Tom Price's background as a doctor qualified him to lead an Agency that touches the lives of every single person in our great land. Well, he was a disaster and did not last a full year as Secretary of HHS. And the immediate past Secretary was a lawyer who did a good job in his pharmaceutical firm of dramatically pushing up insulin prices.

So I am confident that both Mr. Becerra's passion for healthcare issues, as demonstrated throughout his tenure in Congress, and his record as California's attorney general will serve him well as Secretary of Health and Human Services.

I urge my colleagues to support his nomination. He will lead this Agency with integrity and, most importantly, make the health of the American people his No. 1 priority.

With that, I yield the floor and thank my colleague from Ohio for indulging my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from Ohio.

Mr. BROWN. Madam President, I rise to speak in favor of Xavier Becerra, as Senator MENENDEZ just did.

Like Senator MENENDEZ, when Xavier and I came, we all were in the first class in 1992 together. I consider him a friend also and have admired the work that he did as a Member of Congress, as attorney general, and the work that he will do at HHS.

In the middle of the worst health crisis of our lifetime, we need someone leading this Department who understands the importance of public health and who will work to build a stronger, more affordable healthcare system for the future. That is what Xavier Becerra will do.

He has the experience for this job. As Senator MENENDEZ pointed out, he ran the Nation's second largest law firm. He helped pass the Affordable Care Act, as a Member of the House, that expanded coverage to millions of Ohioans and tens of millions of Americans.

I think the Republican opposition, all partisan opposition, to Attorney General Becerra for Secretary of HHS, as Senator CASEY pointed out, is all about their opposition to the Affordable Care Act, their opposition to expansion of Medicaid. I heard one Senator after another say their State isn't treated right by Medicaid, but they didn't even expand Medicaid in many of those States.

As State attorney general, he took on tobacco companies, drug companies, opioid manufacturers, and polluters. That is another reason Republicans oppose him, because he took on their biggest contributors and their sponsors and the people they come to the Senate and fight for. That willingness to stand up to big drug companies is going to be more important than ever in the years ahead.

The cost of prescription drugs eats away at the budget of seniors and families in Cleveland and Akron and Mansfield and Youngstown and Dayton. I look forward to working with future Secretary Becerra to bring down those drug prices. I also hope we can work together to expand the Affordable Care Act and to make it work even better for the families.

We started this month, and the Presiding Officer from Wisconsin was a part of this, with the American Rescue Plan. People buying healthcare in the ACA exchanges are going to have lower premiums because of the rescue plan.

Mr. Becerra will work to undo the vast disparities in healthcare in our country. This pandemic has been the great revealer. It has shown how unequal access to care and pollution and biases in the system and so much else have hurt the health of Black and Brown Americans for generations.

We need to start with getting accurate data on how different communities have been hurt by this pandemic, something I have pushed for over the past year and something I know will be a priority to the new Secretary of Health and Human Services.

I urge my colleagues to join me in confirming him so he can work to help get every American vaccinated, to expand PPE and COVID testing supplies, and to build a stronger healthcare system for the future.

CONFIRMATION OF KATHERINE C. TAI

Mr. BROWN. Madam President, for decades, Ohio workers have watched the spread of a corporate business model where companies shut down production in Toledo or Dayton or Gallipolis or Youngstown. They collected a tax break to move jobs to Mexico or China where they can exploit workers only to sell their products back into the United States. Ohioans live with those consequences every day.

Last week, 81 workers in Bucyrus, OH, had their jobs outsourced to China, where GE-Savant moved production of its high-efficiency light bulbs overseas. Now, 81 union workers are facing tough conversations at the kitchen tables: How will their families survive; will they fall behind on their rent or their mortgage; do they move away with their kids; will their kids have to change schools—all those decisions that families have to make when workers or when plants shut down and move overseas.

The Presiding Officer from Wisconsin has been involved in this fight ever since her career began in the House 20-plus years ago, and I have worked alongside with her to make sure that we have a different trade policy. But when one production line closes, the ripple effect extends, as we know, to the whole community, to other workers and communities in the supply chain.

Yesterday, people in Northeast Ohio, in the Cleveland area, woke up to headlines about yet another American corporation deciding to build things in Mexico instead of Ohio with Ford breaking its promise to invest $900 million in Avon Lake.

I got a call 2 days ago from a smalltown mayor, John Hunter, mayor of Sheffield Lake, OH, a longtime Ford—he was a Ford worker, retired, now mayor of Sheffield Village. He talked about how Ford had promised, at the bargaining table in 2019, that they would invest $900 million in this Avon Lake plant. Ohioans are tired of watching corporation after corporation abandon the workers and communities that have made their businesses successful.

We are being told that production of cheap, simple products will be shipped overseas, while innovative, high-value products will be made in the United States by American workers. We see in Bucyrus, we see in Avon Lake that that is just not true, and we are sick of it. Our trade policy has to change.

That is why today was a good day for this country. Katherine Tai was confirmed by this body 98 to nothing. She understands trade policy. She is the right leader to take us in a new direction on trade with American workers at the center. She is a serious expert. She is respected on both sides of the aisle. We saw that in that vote today. She has a proven track record of making progress for workers.

Last year, I voted for a trade agreement for the first time ever in my career because of our work with Senator WYDEN to fix the Trump administration's corporate trade agreement. He said it was a new NAFTA. It was really a tired, old, mostly the same NAFTA, rebranded as USMCA. We went to work. We secured groundbreaking new worker protections. Katherine Tai was one of the key policymakers who worked with us to make that happen. She was in the negotiations. She was in the discussions. She helped Senator WYDEN and I make this a much better bill that people, like a whole lot of us, as progressives, pro-worker Senators, could vote for.

Her work helped us make the first improvement to enforcing labor standards in our trade agreements enforceable, serious labor standards, since we have been negotiating them.

We know why companies close factories in Ohio and open them in Mexico. They can pay lower wages. They can take advantage of workers who don't have rights. American workers can't compete. We get a race to the bottom on wages and benefits.

The only way of stopping it is raising labor standards in every country we trade with and making sure those labor standards are enforced.

That is what Katherine Tai will do. She will enforce the laws we already have. She will stand up for American workers. She will fight for American businesses when countries cheat the rules. She will work with us to level the playing field so steelworkers and autoworkers and communication workers in Ohio and Wisconsin and all over the country can compete.

She won't allow corporate lobbyists to write trade agreements. We have seen it. Since I came to the Congress, we have seen it with NAFTA. We have seen it with CAFTA. We have seen it with PNTR. We have seen it with agreement after agreement after agreement: Corporate lobbyists write trade agreements. Workers are locked out of the room.

Now, with U.S. Trade Rep Tai's confirmation—the nominee, of course—I asked her what she will do to start to regain the trust of Americans in trade. She said:

You start by listening.

She then talked about the Mahoning Valley, Youngstown area in my State, listening to and understanding the concerns of communities that have gotten hurt over and over.

The administration's outline for its 2021 agenda, trade agenda, which Miss Tai will be charged with carrying out, says that ''trade policy should respect the dignity of work.''

Trade policy should respect the dignity of work and value Americans as workers and wage earners.

Imagine that; that our trade policy, never before have we seen this respecting the dignity of work and valuing Americans as workers and wage earners. That is the kind of thinking we need leading our trade policy.

As the first woman of color to ever serve as the President's chief trade adviser, Katherine Tai knows how important it is for the people in the room making trade decisions to actually reflect, to actually reflect the diverse workforce that our trade policy affects.

We know one good appointment and one good provision won't stop outsourcing, but I am always going to be straight with American workers. We have come a long, long way, but we have a long, long way to go to undo the damage our trade policies have done over the past three decades.

As the Presiding Officer, I have stood up to Presidents of both parties on trade throughout my career. That is not going to change. One of my proudest votes was one of my first votes, and that was against the North American Free Trade Agreement.

I will continue to watch closely what this administration does. If they show any hint of reverting back to the old way of doing things, of letting corporations dictate trade policy at the expense of workers, they will hear about it from me. This is going to be a constant effort over many years.

As thrilled as I am with Katherine Tai, we know we still have a job to do to reorient trade agreements and trade laws that are a priority; that our emphasis no longer is corporations, but it is American workers. It has to be coupled with real investment in the communities that have been hollowed out because of Washington's and Wall Street's past mistakes. It has to be paired with an overhaul of our Tax Code to end, once and for all, the tax breaks paid for by Ohioans and others to send production overseas.

Trade doesn't happen in a vacuum. Our policies must work together to create a global market where workers are treated with dignity; they are safe on the job; they are paid fair wages; they are able to bargain collectively; they are able to bargain collectively for better pay and benefits.

When you love this country, you fight for the people who make it work. That is what Katherine Tai will do.

I thank my colleagues for the strong vote in support of her confirmation.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The junior Senator from Maryland.

NOMINATION OF XAVIER BECERRA

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Madam President, I rise today in strong support for the confirmation of California's attorney general, Xavier Becerra, to be the next Secretary of Health and Human Services.

I am absolutely confident that Mr. Becerra has the knowledge, the experience, the skills, and, just as importantly, the values and principles required of this job—a job that will play a key role in beating the coronavirus and tackling the urgent issues of equity and affordability now facing our healthcare system.

I am especially confident in my assessment of Xavier Becerra because I have known him personally for years, both as a former colleague and as a