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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is Your Name in all the Earth. You are the giver of everlasting life, and nothing can separate us from Your limitless love. You know us better than we know ourselves, and You work for the good of those who love You. You have given us the privilege to be called Your children.

Give our Senators today a faith sufficient for these challenging times. May their trust in You empower them to solve problems, to conquer temptations, and to live more nearly as they ought. Remind them that all things are possible to those who believe. May their trust in You create in them both the desire and power to do Your will.

We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HELLER). The majority leader is recognized.

COMPREHENSIVE ADDICTION AND RECOVERY BILL AND FILLING THE SUPREME COURT VACANCY

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, later this morning the Senate will have an opportunity to take decisive action

to address our Nation's devastating prescription opioid and heroin epidemic.

The Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act is good legislation that will help tackle this crisis by expanding education and prevention initiatives, improving treatment programs, and bolstering law enforcement efforts. This authorization bill, in conjunction with the \$400 million appropriated for opioid-specific programs just a few months ago, can make important strides in combating the growing addiction and overdose problem we have seen in every one of our States.

In Kentucky, what we have seen is some of the highest drug overdose rates in the country, and we know all too well that the work that must be done to overcome this crisis lies before us. Kentuckians also know the positive impact this legislation can have.

Let me remind you of what a top anti-drug official from Northern Kentucky said about CARA. She said this bill "will address the growing needs of our communities in getting appropriate treatment to those who are suffering . . . [and] allow individuals, families, and communities to heal from this scourge." So we will keep working hard to build on these efforts so that fewer Americans ever have to know the heartache of drug addiction and overdose.

I appreciate the work of Senators on both sides of the aisle to advance this bill. On the Democratic side, that includes the junior Senator from Rhode Island and the senior Senator from Minnesota. On the Republican side, that includes Senator AYOTTE from New Hampshire. She cares deeply about this issue and has studied the problem carefully. She has seen the effect it has had on her home State, and she has worked hard to do something about it.

Now, of course, today's vote on CARA would not have been possible at all without the leadership and work of

other colleagues. I particularly want to mention Senator PORTMAN from Ohio, who has been involved with this for several years, from the very beginning, in developing this important legislation for our country. He has worked diligently over the past few years as the lead Republican sponsor of this much-needed bill. He has held many meetings and expert conferences to get an even greater understanding of the issue. We appreciate the long hours he has devoted to addressing this national crisis through the legislation we will pass today.

And of course, we thank the senior Senator from Iowa, Mr. GRASSLEY, the chairman of the Judiciary Committee, for everything he has done to make this moment possible. He understands the urgency of addressing this epidemic, and we all appreciate the very important role he played in guiding this legislation to passage.

Indeed, this critical legislation to address America's national drug epidemic languished in a previous Senate Judiciary Committee, but then Chairman GRASSLEY came along. Under a new chairman and a new Republican majority, the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act became a real priority. It passed the committee swiftly, and it will pass the Senate today.

Important legislation to help the victims of modern slavery languished in a previous Senate Judiciary Committee, but then Chairman GRASSLEY came along. Under a new chairman and a new Republican majority, the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act became a real priority. It passed the committee swiftly, and then it passed the Senate.

The list goes on. Here is the chairman who has worked to give voices to the voiceless. He also has a passion for letting Iowans and the American people be heard. No wonder he is working so hard now to give the people a voice in the direction of the Supreme Court.

The next Supreme Court Justice could dramatically change the direction of the Court and our country for a

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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generation. It is a change in direction that could have significant implications for the rights we hold dear. That includes our Second Amendment rights and our First Amendment rights, things such as Americans' ability to speak out politically and practice their religion freely.

The American people obviously deserve to have a voice in this matter. It is the fairest and most reasonable approach we could take. During our current national conversation, Americans could make their voices heard on the kind of judicial philosophy they favor.

One view says that judges should be committed to an even-handed interpretation of the law and the Constitution so that every American gets a fair shake. Another view—the so-called empathy standard that President Obama favors—says that judges should, on critical questions, rely on their personal ideology to resolve a case.

I know which view Justice Scalia took. He said that setting aside one's personal views is one of the primary qualifications for a judge. "If you're going to be a good and faithful judge, you have to resign yourself to the fact you're not always going to like the conclusions you reach."

The American people will have the chance to make their voices heard in the matter, and that is thanks to a dedicated Senator from Iowa who continues to stand strong for Americans' right to have a say. Chairman GRASSLEY has gotten a lot done under the new majority, just as the Senate has gotten a lot done under the new majority. We will mark another important accomplishment for the American people this morning with the passage of CARA.

Now Senators have a choice. Senators can endlessly debate an issue where the parties don't agree or they can keep working together in areas where we do. I say we should continue doing our work, and the American people should continue making their voices heard. That is good for the country, and that is the best way forward now.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

COMPREHENSIVE ADDICTION AND RECOVERY BILL

Mr. REID. Mr. President, we are certainly pleased we are going to pass this opioid bill shortly. Everyone should understand that the bill would have had some meat if, in fact, we had an opportunity to adopt the Shaheen amendment. It would have funded the authorization that we are now talking about.

My friend always talks about the \$470 million. That has already been obligated. That was last year's obligation to take care of this issue. This author-

ization bill has no money. For my friend to say we have \$470 million is certainly not a factual statement.

FILLING THE SUPREME COURT VACANCY

Mr. REID. Mr. President, 3 years ago voters went to the ballot to elect a President of the United States, the most powerful Nation in the world. The American people spoke, and they overwhelmingly elected President Obama to a second term.

We know that my friend the Republican leader stated that the Republicans had two goals: No. 1, to make sure that Obama was not reelected; and No. 2, that they would oppose everything Obama tried to do. On the first, they were a failure. Obama was reelected with more than 5 million votes. The other agreement the Republicans made was to oppose everything that Obama wanted to do or tried to do, and they have stuck with that. That is why we have had 7 years of turmoil, 7 years of not doing nearly as much as we should, 7 years of endless filibusters.

So my friend the Republican leader can talk all he wants about the progress made last year, but anyone studying what has gone on in the Senate recognizes that simply is without any basis. We have done so little that some political scientists say it is the most unproductive year that has ever been spent in Washington. But 3 years ago, voters went to the ballot box to elect a President. The American people spoke. They spoke loudly, as I have indicated, and they overwhelmingly elected Barack Obama for a second term. It was a 4-year term he was elected to, not a 3-year term—a 4-year term.

During the Presidential term of office, our President has obligations—constitutional obligations. But Republicans continue to reject that election. They continue to reject Barack Obama's Presidency. They say he is illegitimate. They continue to reject the will of the people.

When he was reelected overwhelmingly, obviously, they gave him the constitutional powers to do whatever is within the Constitution. One of those is to nominate Supreme Court Justices, just as he did in his first term. Yet the Republican leader and the senior Senator from Iowa remain committed to blocking the President's nominee. They are not following the Constitution. Republicans are not following the Constitution. The whole country is taking note. But the State of Iowa is taking special note.

Earlier this week, a mother wrote an open letter to Senator GRASSLEY that appeared in the Des Moines Register. Here is what she said:

Refusal to abide by the tenants of our Constitution, and confirm a qualified candidate to the Supreme Court, is a violation of our common values. Your example to my children is that it doesn't really matter what the rules say; if the stakes are high enough and

the chips don't fall your way, it's OK to arbitrarily change the rules and deny the other player his/her turn.

That is the Senate Republicans' lesson to the people who elected them. It doesn't matter who you elected for President, we will refuse to do our duty just to follow Donald Trump's example. Remember what Donald Trump told all of my Republican friends and the country on the Supreme Court nomination. Here is his very, very detailed explanation of what he wants to do. Here is what he said: "Delay, delay, delay." Then he went on to something else. The Republicans have followed that.

Yesterday, Professor Jonathan Carlson of the University of Iowa—he is a professor of law there—published an op-ed in the Cedar Rapids Gazette, a newspaper in Iowa. In the editorial, Professor Carlson wrote:

Grassley's decision [will] rob Americans of their voice.

He went on to say:

The voters elected President Obama to fill the next Supreme Court vacancy, and that vacancy is now upon us. Obama should be allowed to do the job he was elected to do.

Grassley's problem isn't that he wants to give the American people a chance to decide this issue. His problem is that he doesn't like the decision they already made.

Republicans should not ignore the voice of the people just because they don't like what the American people declared, but that is just what the senior Senator from Iowa continues to do—ignore the people of Iowa and the rest of America.

Thirty years ago, Senator GRASSLEY had it right. When the Judiciary Committee began its consideration of the elevation of Justice Rehnquist to be Chief Justice, he said: "This committee has the obligation to build a record and to conduct the most in-depth inquiry that we can." Let me repeat that. "This committee"—he is referring to the Judiciary Committee—"has the obligation to build a record and to conduct the most in-depth inquiry that we can."

Now Senator GRASSLEY isn't interested in inquiries or building a record. He refuses to meet with the nominee, even if the nominee is from Iowa. He refuses to hold a hearing, and he refuses, of course, to have a vote.

Senator GRASSLEY isn't interested in inquiries or building a record. Through his obstruction, he is already choosing to close the door on a potential nominee. He has even said that he will not consider the nomination of his fellow Iowan Judge Jane Kelly, even though she was overwhelmingly elevated from the trial court to the appellate court in this body with, of course, Senator GRASSLEY leading the charge on her behalf. So what he said about his fellow Iowan, Jane Kelly, is a little strange—a little odd—because it was Senator GRASSLEY who strongly supported Judge Kelly and pushed her confirmation to the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals. Senator GRASSLEY says he will preemptively reject Judge Kelly, or