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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable BRIAN SCHATZ, a Senator from the State of Hawaii.

PRAYER

The Rabbi Daniel Ginsberg, associate dean, Ohr Somayach-Tanenbaum College, Jerusalem, and rabbi of Yeshiva Ateres Shmuel, of Waterbury, CT, offered the following prayer:

Our Father in Heaven, bless the United States of America and the brave men and women of our Armed Forces who have left their loved ones in defense of freedom.

Bless our lawmakers—men and women who love to serve and who will serve with love. Place into their hearts and into the hearts of their counselors a moral compass to guide them to the right decisions. O Lord, protect and inspire these good, gifted, and gracious people. Endow them with courage, fortitude, wisdom, and crown them with humility and compassion. May the eternal teachings always be with them—to act with accountability, to relate with respect, to be diligent and devoted, to be a friend of truth.

May our beloved United States be a place where dreams are worth dreaming, a place where sacrifices are worth enduring and where our tomorrows can be even better than our todays.

Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer 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.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

The assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, June 12, 2014.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable BRIAN SCHATZ, a Senator from the State of Hawaii, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATRICK J. LEAHY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. SCHATZ thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

COMMERCE, JUSTICE, SCIENCE, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2015—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I now move to proceed to Calendar No. 428.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the motion.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 428, a bill (H.R. 4660) making appropriations for the Departments of Commerce and Justice, Science, and Related Agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2015, and for other purposes.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I yield to my friend the distinguished Senator from Connecticut.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Connecticut is recognized.

WELCOMING RABBI GINSBERG

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, I thank both Majority Leader REID and Chaplain Black for allowing Rabbi Ginsberg to open our session with what I thought was a very beautiful prayer challenging us to action and to conscience.

Just a word about Rabbi Ginsberg's leadership. For the last decade Rabbi Ginsberg has been helping to organize one of the most robust religious communities in Connecticut.

In 2000 Rabbi Judah Harris conceived a yeshiva in Waterbury. It began with about 38 students and today has grown to service 600 students and 180 families who have settled in a neighborhood just off the center of Waterbury that 10 to 20 years ago had become pretty run-down but today is thriving and has been rebuilt because of the community surrounding the yeshiva.

We have had a wonderful Jewish community since the mid-1800s, but it is stronger today than ever, in large part because of the efforts of Rabbi Ginsberg.

In addition to building this wonderful community and being amongst its leaders, he has been of great counsel to me, Senator BLUMENTHAL, and Governor Mallow as a moral guide but also as someone on whom we can rely when it comes to the tough policy choices we have to make.

I again thank Chaplain Black and Leader REID, and I thank Rabbi Ginsberg for accepting our offer to lead us this morning.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following my remarks and those of the Republican leader, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 11:30 a.m. During that time the Republicans will control the first 30 minutes and the majority will control the second 30 minutes.

At 11:30 a.m. there will be up to four rollcall votes on the confirmation of several nominations, although we are confident and somewhat hopeful that only one rollcall vote will be necessary.

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



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We will move forward to confirm Crystal Nix-Hines to be U.S. Permanent Representative for UNESCO; Michael J. McCord to be Under Secretary of Defense, Comptroller; R. Jane Chu, Chairperson of the National Endowment for the Arts for a term of 4 years; and then we will move forward on Todd A. Batta to be Assistant Secretary of Agriculture.

At 1:45 p.m. this afternoon there will be three rollcall votes on the confirmation of three Federal Reserve nominations: Lael Brainard to be a member of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System; Jerome H. Powell to be a member of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System; and Stanley Fischer to be Vice Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

Would the Chair announce the business of the day.

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 until 11:30 a.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the time being equally divided or controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the Republicans controlling the first 30 minutes and the majority controlling the next 30 minutes.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum, and I ask unanimous consent that the time be charged 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.

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.

VETERANS HEALTH CARE

Mr. McCONNELL. Yesterday the Senate passed bipartisan legislation to address the VA scandal. The Sanders-McCain bill will increase patient choice, it will infuse some much needed accountability into the VA system, and it was important for us to show some urgency in addressing the crisis. That is why I voted for it, and that is why I am glad that the majority leader decided to move forward on this effort, even if it took a vote to set aside a par-

tisan bill in order to take up this important bipartisan legislation.

It will now go to conference so it can be improved further. The sooner the bill managers begin negotiations with their colleagues in the House, the sooner we can get a bill on the President's desk. I am optimistic they will do just that.

As I have said all week, the systemic failures and scandals we have seen within the administration are a national disgrace. When you see 100,000 veterans—100,000 of them—waiting for care, that is a national disgrace. When you see so many veterans waiting 3 months or longer just to get an appointment, that is a national disgrace. And when you see veterans dying before they even receive care they were counting on, it is completely unacceptable.

So this problem needs to be solved, and there is more to be done. A lot of the responsibility here resides with the President himself. He still needs to nominate a capable manager who possesses the necessary skills, leadership, and determination to fix this scandal. He needs to support the thousands of VA workers committed to serving our veterans and to provide all those who serve bravely with the timely care they deserve, and he needs to use all the tools in his toolbox to address the systemic management failures—both the tools he already has and the new ones we can provide him, such as those contained within the legislation we passed yesterday. Our veterans have waited long enough for care, and they shouldn't be made to wait any longer.

90TH BIRTHDAY OF PRESIDENT GEORGE H.W. BUSH

Mr. McCONNELL. Obviously much of Washington's focus this week has been on doing right by our veterans. That is exactly what we should be doing. We owe so much to the men and women who protect us. In that spirit I would be remiss if I failed to acknowledge an important milestone just reached by one of America's most famous veterans.

Today our Nation's 41st President, George H.W. Bush, turns 90. It is a rare milestone. Only 4 other presidents have ever reached it: Herbert Hoover, John Adams, Gerald Ford, and the man President Bush once served under, Ronald Reagan.

Beyond wishing him a very happy birthday, I want to acknowledge President Bush's extraordinary record of service. On his 18th birthday the future President volunteered as a World War II Navy pilot, going on to receive the Distinguished Flying Cross for bravery. From there he would go on to excel in a dizzying number of fields as a businessman, a Congressman, a diplomat, CIA Director, leader of his party, Vice President and President, and Commander in Chief during Desert Storm and Desert Shield.

Even his post-Presidency has been marked by continuing and gracious

willingness to serve. Yet for all of his professional distinction, I know President Bush's favorite job never appeared on his resume. It was his role as proud husband to Barbara, who also turned a year older this week, and as the father of five adoring children and proud grandfather and great-grandfather. Maybe that is why every time you see him these days he always has a big smile on his face and a lively pair of socks on his feet. With a loving family like that, it is not hard to see why.

So I am proud to cosponsor the resolution we agreed to yesterday honoring this good man and former President for such a long lifetime of service. I know my colleagues join me in sending President Bush the warmest of birthday wishes.

TRIBUTE TO MARTHA J. CASSITY

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, one final note concerning our Nation's veterans. I want to honor an exemplary citizen of my home State, the Commonwealth of Kentucky, who has devoted her life to service of our country. Martha J. Cassity is a veteran of the U.S. Army, a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and this Saturday she will be named the first female veteran State commander of the Kentucky VFW. Her ascension to this post is an accomplishment I believe is deserving of recognition and praise here in the Senate.

Martha was born on September 29, 1957, in my hometown of Louisville. She was raised there by her parents Joan and Charles Blanford. While attending Western High School, Martha joined the Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars in 1974, thus beginning her life of devoted service to her country.

The stated mission of the Ladies Auxiliary is to serve "the veterans of this country and our communities in honor of the sacrifices and commitment of every man and woman who has served in uniform." For 9 years Martha worked tirelessly to advance this mission, holding multiple chairmanships in the organization.

Martha joined the U.S. Army in October of 1984 as a track vehicle repairer and gave 10 years of honorable service to the Army, including postings in Germany and South Korea. She became eligible to join the VFW while stationed in South Korea, and she did so in 1991.

Upon returning from South Korea, Martha was stationed at Fort Stewart, GA, where she was injured during the battalion's preparations for Operation Desert Storm. She was honorably discharged in 1994. After leaving the Army, Martha earned her associate's degree in applied science from Alabama Southern Community College. Although her days in the military were behind her, Martha's service to America and her fellow veterans would continue. Since 1999 Martha has been heavily involved in the Veterans of Foreign Wars. She has held numerous chairmanships and chairs on the post and