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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.

Our Father God, in the fret and fever of these challenging times when we know not what a day may bring forth, we thank You for this quiet moment when all else is shut out and our hearts are uplifted to You. Lord, we cannot make better laws or a better world except as we are better people.

Inspire our lawmakers to make and keep their inner lives pure and kind and just. Show them what You desire for this Nation and world, and help them to be faithful agents for bringing Your will to pass.

Correct our mistakes, redeem our failures, and confirm our right actions. Lord, crown this day with the benediction of Your peace.

We pray in Your wonderful 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 MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PAUL). The Democratic leader is recognized.

THE REPUBLICAN-LED SENATE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, over the past several years, we have seen a very disturbing practice which is becoming commonplace in the Republican-domi-

nated U.S. Congress. Governing by brinkmanship, manufactured crisis, flirting with deadlines, a game of chicken—we can call it whatever we want, but Republicans are doing it. Governing by crisis is a modus operandi of the modern Republican Party. We saw it in 2011, as the newly elected Republican majority in the House pushed the U.S. Government to the threshold of shutdown and default, and again with the so-called fiscal cliff in 2012—financial brinkmanship for our whole country—and then, of course, the infamous government shutdown that actually did occur in 2013, and it occurred over a period of several weeks and was devastating to our economy.

But since the Republicans assumed control of the Senate earlier this year, the brinkmanship in the Halls of the Capitol has become unbearable. Recall what happened this past February. ISIS had just burned a man alive in a cage. We saw that. The world saw that. The tragic Charlie Hebdo shooting had just occurred a month earlier in France, and that spilled over into Belgium, where more people were killed. Belgium authorities were making sweeping arrests of terror cells, and ISIS was threatening us in our homeland. Three Brooklyn men were arrested for trying to join ISIS here in our homeland. Yet, in this tumultuous environment, Senate Republicans brought the American Government within hours of a shutdown of the Department of Homeland Security. This is a Cabinet-level office that was created during the Bush administration, the Agency responsible for the safety of each American in our homeland. It was stunning.

But even more stunning is the fact that they keep doing it over and over again. This past week, it happened with the expiration of the important PATRIOT Act provisions. A few Senators wanted to offer some amendments on that legislation. That is all it was—amendments. In fact, on the Fri-

day night of the debate, one Senator said: I will take two amendments. We on this side agreed—two amendments. Nope. Can't do that. And so, again, brinkmanship. The PATRIOT Act is a law that helps keep terrorists from attacking America. Would it have been asking too much to have a little bit of time to debate this issue? We were not given that time.

The Republican leadership knew for years that these programs were scheduled to expire on June 1, 2015. People who didn't like this act—and there were a number of them—gave speeches all over the country talking about the act. It was no secret that the act was not that popular in some people's minds.

Last year, Senator MCCONNELL knew this deadline was looming when he prevented the Senate from debating another version of the USA FREEDOM Act by conducting one of their hundreds of filibusters stopping President Obama's efforts. And the majority leader knew a month ago that the deadline was coming and chose to prioritize other legislation over these critical programs. So what happened? The authority for these sensitive programs expired.

Yesterday, we passed the USA FREEDOM Act, reestablishing these important terror-fighting provisions with some improvements in them. But for 2 days, America had its guard down. Every minute that passed from that lapse to passage of the USA FREEDOM Act was an unnecessary gamble with our national security. And for what? What did the Republicans achieve by letting these provisions lapse?

This is no way to govern—using legislative deadlines as some kind of ransom, staggering from one catastrophe to another.

Now on the horizon are two more important deadlines for legislation that is important to the American people—the Export-Import Bank and the Federal highway program. And what are we

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



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doing? We are not doing these measures; we are on a bill that the President said he is going to veto. The Export-Import Bank expires at the end of this month, which is just a few weeks from now.

The Bank creates jobs by providing loans and loan guarantees to foreign customers who purchase American exports. This year alone, the Export-Import Bank supported 165,000 American jobs—165,000 jobs. What does it cost the American taxpayer? Zero. Nothing. In fact, it makes money for our country. Over the last 10 years, the Bank has returned more than \$7 billion to the Treasury.

The majority leader should bring the Bank's reauthorization to the Senate floor for a vote before the charter expires at the end of this month, but it appears that is not going to happen. The senior Senator from Texas is already saying the Republicans have no intention of meeting that deadline. Instead, the American people will have to endure another manufactured crisis at the hands of Senate Republicans. Should we also assume the majority leader will do the same with the Federal highway program, which expires at the end of July? The Senate also faces a looming deadline for that program. It is critical that we craft a long-term solution to America's crumbling roads, highways, bridges, and rail systems.

Just a few miles from here, we have the Memorial Bridge. It is a beautiful bridge. It was built in the 1930s. The Memorial Bridge connects the Arlington National Cemetery to the Lincoln Memorial and the Mall. It is one of the busiest bridges in the whole DC area. Each day, 68,000 cars and buses cross that bridge, along with countless pedestrians and bicyclists.

Last week, Federal officials announced they will be shutting down two lanes of the bridge to repair the bridge, which is structurally deficient, which was caused by a number of problems, not the least of which is corrosion due to all of the moisture we have here. That is a problem we have with everything. And the problems, just minutes from the Capitol, are a daily reality for millions of Americans.

The Memorial Bridge is just one of the 64,000 structurally deficient bridges throughout our country. The people in Minnesota understand what this means. They had a bridge collapse, and 30-some people died as a result of that. That happened recently.

How long will we wait to fix these problems? What will it take before Republicans get serious about a solution to our crumbling highways, railroads, and bridges?

We understand. Democrats understand the urgency of the crisis facing our country, and we are ready to work with Republicans to rebuild our bridges, roads, and railway systems. We understand that investing in our surface transportation, including rail, can be a job creator and economy booster. For every \$1 billion we spend

on these roads, bridges, and rail systems, we employ 47,500 high-paying jobs and many other lesser paying jobs.

Before we left for recess a couple of weeks ago, we passed a short-term extension for the surface transportation programs. That is the 33rd time we have done that. Now that we are back in session, there appears to be no urgency from the Senate Republicans to schedule committee hearings, mark up the bill or to make the highway trust fund solvent.

Once again it seems the majority leader is content to let another vital program lapse, regardless of the harm it does or the American jobs he puts at risk.

How many more of these manufactured crises must the American people endure? How many more times would the majority leader let another vital program lapse regardless of the harm it does? It is imperative that Republicans not continue their assault on job creation in America. We should not let the Export-Import Bank or the Federal highway program expire, losing the millions of American jobs they create and sustain. It is beyond belief that on these two important legislative matters, Republicans will not help the American people with instant job creation. In the past, these two issues were never handled this way. The Export-Import Bank had three of its biggest cheerleaders: Reagan, Bush, and Bush. That is not the way it is anymore. The highway bill used to pass every 5 or 6 years, and it would be extended for 5 or 6 years. Until the Republicans changed the way the Senate operates, we used to pass these bills easily—but not now. We are having to address multiple short-term extensions each year and it seems every few months. This will be, as I indicated earlier, the 33rd short-term extension for the Federal highway program. This is not legislating. This is Republican procrastination.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I know my good friend, the Democratic leader, is frustrated that he is no longer setting the schedule in the Senate. He seems to differ with the order of priorities that we deal with things here. Yesterday, he said debating the Defense authorization bill was “a waste of time”—a waste of time to debate the Defense authorization bill in a time of high crisis for our country.

Nevertheless, a new majority sets the agenda of the schedule these days. Today, the Senate turns to the consideration of the National Defense Authorization Act for 2016—in June, not in December, at the end of the year, in

a situation in which no amendments are allowed.

This legislation, which authorizes funds and sets out policy for our military annually, is always important, but it is especially important now, given the multitude of threats that challenge us as a nation; for instance, the aggressive rise of ISIL, Iran's ambitions for regional hegemony and its accompanying quest for nuclear weapons, and both Chinese and Russian efforts to erode American influence and assert domination over their neighbors. It is also important, given the need to start thinking about preparing our armed services for the many global threats the next President will confront the day he or she takes office.

The reality is we have left behind the era of when Americans could withdraw from conflict overseas and escape to the comfort and security provided by vast oceans and isolation. We have lost the luxury of building our forces years after a war has begun. Most important, the simple tradeoff of guns versus butter, drawing down our conventional forces, hollowing them out, and standing behind our nuclear arsenal does not suit the strategic challenges we now face. We can no longer ignore ungoverned spaces. We have left the Cold War long behind. Tradeoffs have become more difficult to accomplish, and they require greater strategic thought than the President has provided, and we have seen the resilience of the terrorist threat.

Senator McCAIN, the chairman of the Armed Services Committee, is a man with the depth of experience to understand the need to modernize, refit, and prepare our military for the threats and operations in the coming years. Thankfully, for the Senate, he is also a man with vision to craft a bill that could put us on a path to address those challenges—legislation that could help equip the next President with adequate capabilities to address threats from adversaries like Russia, China, ISIL, and Al Qaeda, not to mention the unforeseen challenges that inevitably arise. That is just the course this Defense authorization bill proposes to put us on—the correct course. I would like to commend Senator McCAIN, not just for crafting this bill but for working closely with Members of both parties to steer it through committee with overwhelming bipartisan support.

This legislation proposes to do a lot of things, but fundamentally it is premised on a commonsense idea that we should cut waste and redirect that authorized funding to where it is actually needed—such as meeting the needs of the men and women who put everything on the line—everything—to keep us safe.

In a time when missions are in imbalance with resources for a military that has already had to endure too many cuts in recent years, it just makes sense to do things such as taking on a growing bureaucracy in the Pentagon to make it more efficient and effective,