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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.

Answer us when we call, O God, and bless our Nation.

May our lawmakers work to do Your will, remembering that You have set apart the Godly for yourself. Inspire our Senators to find refuge in You and to discover blessings and joy in Your favor.

Lord, continue to supply our needs according to Your riches in glory, encouraging us to learn contentment by trusting the unfolding of Your loving providence. Keep us from stumbling or slipping as we find safety by walking with integrity.

Eternal God, to Your precious Name we ascribe glory, majesty and might, dominion and power, now and always. 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. PAUL). The majority leader is recognized.

KENTUCKY FLOODING

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, this morning we are all thinking of the many Kentuckians who have been impacted by severe flooding over the past couple of days. Eastern Kentucky has

been especially hard hit. Governor Beshear has declared a state of emergency, and the Kentucky delegation stands ready to assist in this effort.

The tragic flooding has already claimed two lives in Johnson County. Six remain missing. Others were forced to watch as homes and cherished memories were swept away. We can only imagine what these Kentuckians and their families must be going through.

This has been an especially trying task for our first responders as well. They have had to battle against debris and downed power lines. They have worked to rescue Kentuckians from trees. It hasn't been easy, but it reminds us again of why we owe these men and women so very much. I join Kentuckians in thanking them for all they have done and all they continue to do.

NUCLEAR AGREEMENT WITH IRAN

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, on an entirely different matter, I said yesterday the Senate would thoroughly review the White House deal with Iran. I said we would hold hearings and we would call witnesses and ultimately vote to approve or disapprove the deal in accordance with the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act. That is what we have long planned to do, and once the administration fully transmits the text, that is just what we will do.

Senators are already taking a close look at what they have been able to get their hands on thus far, but the Senate eagerly awaits the full transmission of that text and the required certifications. We await the beginning of a comprehensive review process premised on a simple question: Can the agreement meet its essential test of leaving our country and our allies safer?

EVERY CHILD ACHIEVES ACT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Finally, Mr. President, turning to the business currently

before the Senate, the bipartisan education debate we are having in the new Senate is good for our country and it was long overdue.

For too long, bureaucrats in Washington tried to dictate top-down, one-size-fits-all education policies to millions of students and families across our country. It was hurting our kids, and it needed to change. So a new Senate that is back to work for the American people decided to work together to do something about it. We thought it was past time to place more education decisionmaking power where it truly belongs—with parents, with teachers, with States, and with school boards, not with a distant Federal bureaucracy.

The pundits said Washington could never address these challenges, but the bipartisan Every Child Achieves Act actually received unanimous support from every Democrat and every Republican in committee. Just think about that for a moment. It is an impressive achievement, and it wouldn't have been possible without a functioning Senate and a lot of dedication and determination from the bill's primary sponsors, the Republican Senator from Tennessee and the Democratic Senator from Washington.

This debate may be years overdue, but Republicans and Democrats are certainly having their voices heard today. They are working across the aisle, they are representing the views of their constituents, and they are offering amendments. The new Senate has processed over two dozen amendments to this bill already, and we have adopted quite a few of them. In fact, we have now taken more rollcall amendment votes this year in the new Congress than throughout the entirety of the last Congress combined. That is an achievement both parties can celebrate. It represents progress for our country. And this afternoon we have a chance to make more because, with cooperation from our friends across the

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



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aisle, we can continue to advance the Every Child Achieves Act later today and set up final passage soon. That would mean another bipartisan achievement for our country and a long-overdue win for our kids.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, my heart goes out to the people in Eastern Kentucky, with the devastating floods. The issue before our entire country is that we have storms like this appearing from nowhere, storms like we have never had before. I don't know the history of Kentucky, but I have watched and been briefed on what is going on around the rest of the Nation, and these storms are coming all the time—untoward.

It is too bad that my Republican colleagues have denied climate change. We have to do something, and we have to do something very soon.

There was a meeting a few days ago at the White House where the President announced that with regard to climate change we have to do something now. He said that by the year 2100, scientists say, the seas will have risen 16 feet. What does that mean? It means that much of Florida will be underwater.

We have things happening that have never been recorded before. In the Sierras, some bears are not hibernating. We have an average rainfall and snowpack in upper Colorado, and none of it gets into the river. So I would hope my friends would join with us in doing something positive with regard to climate change.

PUBLIC SAFETY AND THE HIGHWAY BILL

Mr. REID. Mr. President, more than 62 million vehicles were recalled last year in our country—twice the previous record. The number of safety complaints to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration doubled. Over the past year, for example, faulty ignition switches led to the recall of 2.6 million cars. At least 124 people died and almost 300 were injured by this ignition switch problem, which did many different things, one of which was to stall a car in traffic and during the process disable the airbags. The manufacturer was aware of the defect for more than a decade and did nothing about it. Exploding airbags—another problem—claimed the lives of at least 8 people and led to the recall of 34 million vehicles—the largest recall of any consumer product in the United States ever. Once again, it appears the manufacturer knew of the defect years before notifying Federal regulators.

Given the number of recalls, Congress should be investing the resources to improve public safety and give regulators the tools to keep us safe. But it appears Senate Republicans have learned nothing from the many recalls just this year. The Republican highway safety bill, which is being considered in the committee on commerce today, does not increase funding for Federal traffic programs. In fact, it cuts them back. Why? The bill does not provide any new resources to address the record level of safety recalls and consumer complaints. Under the Republican bill that is being considered, automakers that cover up defects will continue to face the same very limited penalties. Their executives will be able to continue to escape accountability.

But that isn't all of it. The highway bill the Republicans are pushing forward is loaded with harmful provisions that roll back efforts to strengthen public safety. The bill would allow 18-year-old young men and women—18 years old—to drive commercial 18-wheelers across State lines. Think about that. Despite studies which show that these young drivers have a fatal crash rate almost 70 percent higher than older drivers, the Republican safety plan would allow these inexperienced teenagers to drive the largest trucks that appear on the road.

If this odyssey of the Republicans in the commerce committee is signed into law, it will lead to more crashes and, sadly, more injuries and more deaths.

Every day, 30 people in our great country are killed by drunk drivers—30 people killed by drunk drivers. I just learned a couple of days ago of a person who worked for me, who was a tremendously great employee of the Senate—their brother-in-law was killed by a drunk driver. It is so sad that we are not doing more to not only stop drunk driving but to punish drunk drivers. The policy Republicans propose today hurts our efforts to combat drunk driving.

Listen to this one. The Republicans' bill would lessen incentives for States that develop programs to prevent people who have been convicted of drunk driving from starting their cars if they have been drinking—for example, just a simple, inexpensive device on a car. If someone has been drinking too much, the car won't start. But Republicans are going to take care of this and get rid of it. No longer will States have the ability to do that. The Federal Government should not be involved in programs like that.

The Republicans' plan also undermines safety measures that protect passengers and trains and, of course, the safety of all of us because of the problems we have with freight trains. There is a program that was designed by science—it has been available for a long time—called positive train control which overrides operator error. A perfect example of this is what happened in Philadelphia. If that had been in effect, that accident would not have oc-

curred. But the Republicans fixed this—they are going to stop the program for 3 years.

Under the present law, these programs had to be implemented by the end of this year—not with the Republicans in the commerce committee, which will be part of any highway bill we have. They will just stop it for 3 years, and that will lead to more deaths, more injuries, and more terror.

I can't understand why the Republicans would propose doing that—delaying the deadline for positive train control by more than 3 years. I said 3 years, but it is actually more than that. There is no reason to roll back deadlines for important safety measures for our passenger trains. Is this the best Republicans can do? I ask that.

For Americans who live near rail lines, trains are increasingly carrying more and more flammable materials—oil, ethanol, and other explosive products. In February of this year, a train carrying oil derailed in West Virginia, sending exploding fireballs into the air and causing large necessary evacuations.

This and other crashes led the Department of Transportation to require the installation of new electronic brakes for any train moving flammable materials. Requiring better brakes when carrying these materials seems like a commonsense safety measure.

What do the Republicans do? Their bill repeals an important freight rail provision, jeopardizing communities across the country with tragic spills. We don't need more accidents. We need fewer accidents. We need to move forward and to continue the minimal programs we have, not roll them back. It is clear the Republicans have not learned anything from the auto recalls or the train crashes. The Senate can do better than adopting the Republican's attack on public safety. If the Republicans choose to put those measures in the highway bill that I am told is coming forward, it will not survive the Senate. We can't have stuff like that. It would be just untoward and wrong.

Mr. President, there is no one on the floor, and I ask that the Chair announce the business of the day.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

EVERY CHILD ACHIEVES ACT OF 2015

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 1177, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1177) to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to ensure that every child achieves.

Pending: