

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 (Mrs. ERNST). The majority leader is recognized.

APPROPRIATIONS AND TAX RELIEF NEGOTIATIONS

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, Members and staff from both parties are continuing their work on appropriations and on the tax relief measure. As we all know, they have made a lot of progress in recent days. I want to thank all who have been involved in this effort as it continues. We will continue to consult and engage with colleagues as we make further progress on these last two significant items we must complete this year.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

OMNIBUS AND TAX EXTENDERS NEGOTIATIONS

Mr. REID. Madam President, I want to underscore what the Republican leader has said: Everyone is working hard toward a bipartisan compromise in the omnibus and the so-called tax extenders legislation. Many of us in the Senate and the House and our staffs worked through the weekend and have made a lot of progress. We are not there yet.

Keeping the Federal Government open and funded is a congressional responsibility. I am confident we will fulfill this most basic constitutional duty. It is just a question of when we do it. I hope it is sooner rather than later.

PARIS CLIMATE CHANGE AGREEMENT

Mr. REID. Madam President, this past weekend President Obama and the United States took yet another historic step in addressing climate change. The landmark agreement forged in Paris by the United States and about 200 other nations will go far in protecting our planet for future generations.

Climate change poses one of the greatest threats our world has ever known. Here in the United States, we are beginning to see the devastation caused by all kinds of things—in the Western part of the United States, raging wildfires that we have never, ever seen before; in arid places like Nevada

and in very, very non-arid places like in the mountains of California, Washington, and Oregon, rising sea levels; our military bases, coastal bases—those in Virginia and Florida—are feeling this impact, changing operation of the bases, with extreme weather and droughts. Now is the time to act to stem the tide of climate change.

I applaud President Obama for his work on this issue. His leadership has inspired the international community to address climate change and its catastrophic effects.

TRIBUTE TO BRIGADIER GENERAL ROBERT T. HERBERT

Mr. REID. Madam President, on a note that I feel important to make for my staff and me, it is important to recognize the accomplishments of everyone here in Washington, here on Capitol Hill, here in the Senate; it is important to recognize the accomplishments of our staff. We have such remarkably dedicated people. I am so proud of my staff. They have worked this past week tirelessly.

I want to talk today, though, about just one of those who has worked for me. His name is BG Robert T. Herbert. He came to me as a congressional fellow two decades ago, and he never left. He was so good. This month marks the 40th year of General Herbert's service in the United States Armed Forces. In 1975, he joined the Army and embarked on a remarkable military career. He grew up in a military family and always dreamed of becoming a military aviator. He made that dream a reality, logging over 7,000 flight hours in all different kinds of aircraft—fixed-wing and rotary—spending time in virtually every aircraft within the United States Army inventory.

As with all pilots, as they get a little older and have different assignments, they just can't stand the fact that they can't fly as they used to. So he no longer spends his days in the cockpit when he does his duties at the National Guard. He is Special Assistant to the Chief of the National Guard Bureau for National Security Policy here in Washington. He previously worked as Nevada's assistant adjunct general.

I am grateful for Bob's service to our Nation. A 40-year military career is an incredible achievement. But I am also thankful for his work here in the Senate. He has been a tireless worker for the people of Nevada and for the country.

Congratulations to BG Robert T. Herbert on this important milestone, and I look forward to his many other accomplishments as Bob's illustrious career continues.

Would the Presiding Officer announce to the Senate what we are going to be doing the rest of the day.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 5 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

REMEMBERING DANIEL CAPUANO

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, it is with a heavy heart that I rise today to speak about the loss of one of the bravest men in the Chicago Fire Department, Daniel Capuano.

Daniel went to work this morning—just as he has done every day for the past 15 years—ready to fight fires and risk his life to save the lives of others. Not many people can say they wake up each day ready to make that sacrifice, but this morning, Daniel Capuano did just that.

At 2:40 a.m. today, Daniel Capuano and his fellow firefighters were contacted about a warehouse fire in the 9200 block of South Baltimore Avenue on the South Side of Chicago. Daniel and the other firefighters were immediately dispatched to the scene. The warehouse was undergoing construction, and because of that, there were reports of holes in the floors. When they got there, they saw billowing smoke coming out of the vacant three-story warehouse. Firefighter Capuano and his team moved cautiously through the second floor of the warehouse in search of the cause of the fire, but the heavy, thick smoke made it nearly impossible to see, causing Capuano to fall through an elevator shaft from the second floor of the building to the basement. His fellow firefighters were able to find him quickly and get him on an ambulance and to a nearby hospital. Sadly, it was too late. By the time he arrived at the hospital, he was already in serious condition. At 4:25 a.m. this morning, Daniel Capuano was pronounced dead from trauma.

It is times like these when we are reminded of just how dangerous the job these men and women face every day really is. Daniel Capuano spent his entire career putting the safety of his community before his own. For 15 years he served the Chicago Fire Department fighting and eliminating fires while pulling others to safety. Before that, he was a firefighter in Evergreen Park, a Chicago suburb.

Daniel Capuano is a true hero who made the ultimate sacrifice to make the residents of his community and neighborhood safe. Daniel's death is a devastating loss and serves as a reminder of the risk our firefighters and

other first responders take every day. My condolences and prayers are with his wife Julie; his three children, Nicholas, Andrew, and Amanda; and his fellow firefighters.

Daniel, you are a hero to me and to the people of Chicago and Illinois. There are no words to truly describe the sorrow for your loss. I cannot, nor can anyone, thank you for the commitment you made for the safety of the people in your community.

FREEDOM OF RELIGION

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, it is interesting—the Midwest draws us together in the right way.

Last night in Springfield, IL, a typical midwestern American city, there was a gathering of people from all across the city at 5:30 on a Sunday night. It was a gathering at the Islamic Society of Springfield. A request had been made for people of all religions to come together and to pray in solidarity with our Islamic neighbors. It was billed as a peace rally originally scheduled to be held outside, even in winter weather. Although it has been warm for this time of year, it was raining heavy last night as we all arrived at the building, so everyone crammed inside the building. There was standing and sitting room only. It was a huge outpouring of support for our Muslim brothers and sisters in the Springfield community.

There were representatives of virtually every religion present, and many spoke—rabbis, ministers, Catholic nuns, and even a few elected officials—trying to let our friends in the Muslim community know that despite some of the things that had been said over the last few weeks by Presidential candidates, we in fact embrace them as part of the American family.

There was also an event this weekend that occurred far away from Springfield, in Scottsdale, AZ, where my colleague in the Senate, JEFF FLAKE of Arizona, visited a mosque. It was widely reported. He made outstanding remarks about the regret he felt over some of the political statements that had been made over the last several weeks by political candidates. JEFF FLAKE reminded us across the Nation, as I tried to remind those in Springfield last night, that America is a nation which values the freedom of religious belief.

Our Constitution speaks to only three elements when it comes to religion and our government. First, it says that each of us has the freedom and liberty to choose our own religion or to choose no religion. Second, it says our government will never establish an official state religion. Third, in article VI, it says there will be no religious test in the United States of America of candidates for public office.

It is hard to believe that those three simple thoughts have carried this Nation for more than two centuries when it comes to religion, but we have been

successful. Our Nation has been successful where others have failed. There have been times when we failed to live up to our own ideals and our own values, and when hateful statements are made by Presidential candidates, it calls on us to remember our history and to remember triumphant moments and sad moments as well.

It was May of 1939 when the ship *SS St. Louis* left Germany with 900 Jewish passengers. They were trying to escape Hitler and the Nazis. They went to Havana, Cuba, and they were turned away. Then they came to Miami, FL, asking if they could be refugees, Jewish refugees, coming to the United States, and they were turned away as well. The 900 Jewish passengers went back to Germany. According to the records of the Holocaust Museum, 200 of them perished in the Holocaust. It was about that same time when Senator Robert Wagner of New York offered a measure in the Senate—in this very Chamber—that our country would accept 10,000 Jewish children from Germany who were seeking to escape the Holocaust. Sadly, that measure was defeated.

We have other instances in history that go back to the beginning of our Nation where we have been challenged to live up to the ideals and principles of the Constitution. That challenge is with us again today.

A candidate for President of the United States—of a major political party—has called for the exclusion of Muslims from being allowed to immigrate into the United States. That is reprehensible, it is outrageous, and it is un-American. Members of both political parties in Congress have spoken out against it, as they should.

We must remember that many of our Nation's Founders fled religious persecution to come to this Nation. George Washington summed up the prevailing view when he said, "In this land of equal liberty, it is our boast, that a man's religious tenets will not forfeit the protection of the laws." That, of course, is included in the First Amendment to our Constitution.

Throughout our history, many religious minorities have faced intolerance, often prejudice. It was once Catholics from Ireland, Italy, and my mother's homeland of Lithuania who were questioned. Today American Muslims face the same threats of similar discrimination.

In recent weeks a number of prominent Republican leaders have made these threats. But I add quickly that there has been a greater number, thank goodness, who have spoken out against these statements, even on the Republican side.

One Presidential candidate compared Syrian refugees to "rabid dogs" and said that American Muslims should not be President of the United States. The frontrunner for the Republican nomination called for a "total and complete" ban on Muslim immigrants coming to the United States and advocated

for closing down their places of worship. These comments are reprehensible and do not reflect who we are as a nation.

These comments also don't reflect the vital role that millions of Muslim Americans play in my hometown of Springfield, IL, and across the United States. There are American Muslims who are teachers, professors, doctors, police officers, first responders, and members of the U.S. Armed Forces.

I am concerned that the anti-Muslim rhetoric we have heard in recent weeks could alienate the Muslim community and harm the important relationship between the community and Federal law enforcement.

Last night, as I was leaving the gathering in Springfield, a mother pulled me aside and said she feared for her daughter who wears a hijab—a veil—and who may be the subject of discrimination because of the things that have been said by some of these Presidential candidates. It is important for us to understand her feelings, the love of her children, just as we love our own children and grandchildren, and to also realize that the feelings of the Muslim Americans are truly part of our Nation.

Last night we began the gathering in Springfield, IL, pledging allegiance to the flag—all of us—and singing "The Star-Spangled Banner." Then the first person to make remarks in the Muslim community told us he had served in the U.S. Navy for 19 years. It is hard to imagine some of the hateful things that have been said in that context.

In testimony before the Senate Intelligence Committee in 2004—not long after 9/11—FBI Director Robert Mueller thanked the Muslim and Arab American communities "for their assistance and for their ongoing commitment to preventing acts of terrorism." It has been important to the United States. He went on to say: "All of us understand that the evolving threats we face today, and those we will face tomorrow, can only be defeated if we work together."

The current FBI Director, James Comey, spoke before a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing last week and said:

We've worked so hard over the last 15 years to build relationships of trust that allow us to find out who might be trouble and to stop it. That's in everybody's interest. And anything that gets in the way, that erodes that relationship of trust, is not a good thing.

The inflammatory speeches we have heard create a fertile ground for discrimination. Attorney General Loretta Lynch recently denounced the "disturbing rise in anti-Muslim rhetoric" and stated that her "greatest fear as a prosecutor . . . is that the rhetoric will be accompanied by acts of violence."

Sitting next to me last night in Springfield was the U.S. attorney for the Central District of Illinois, James Lewis—a friend and someone I am very honored and proud to have nominated to the President for this position. He