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Senate

The Senate met at 10 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.

Eternal God, help us ever to see eternity beyond time. As our Senators labor, may they do so with an eternal perspective. Remind them that they are serving You as well as country, preparing themselves for the higher joy of service in the world to come.

In this season of hope, remind us of Your breakthrough into time to give us eternal life. Help us to seek and count life's blessings so that our lives may

flow in ceaseless praise. Lord, thank You for Your promise to be with us always, to the end of the world and beyond.

We pray in Your mighty 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. ROUNDS). The majority leader is recognized.

OMNIBUS AND TAX RELIEF LEGISLATION

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, the American people have two principal concerns: our Nation's security and the economy. The legislation we will soon consider will help address both. It would enact permanent tax relief for American families and small businesses. That will lead to more jobs, more opportunity, and more economic growth here in America.

NOTICE

If the 114th Congress, 1st Session, adjourns sine die on or before December 24, 2015, a final issue of the *Congressional Record* for the 114th Congress, 1st Session, will be published on Thursday, December 31, 2015, to permit Members to insert statements.

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By order of the Joint Committee on Printing.

GREGG HARPER, Chairman.

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



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Another way this legislation will support jobs and grow the economy is by permanently eliminating a relic from the 1970s. This 40-year energy ban has cost our economy jobs, and it strengthens oil exporters such as Iran and Russia. It is no secret that Russia views its energy resources as a foreign policy tool. It is no secret that Iran views its energy resources as a component of national power, nor is it a secret that President Obama recently granted the Iranian regime permission to export those resources. Many think it is time the American people were treated at least as fairly as Iran.

This critical energy reform would help strengthen America's jobs and America's safety, but it is only a small part of how the overall bill would support our national security. For instance, we know that preventing another crisis in military readiness will require significant investments over the medium term and over the long term. We know there is much to be done, but we also know this legislation represents a critical step forward. It would finally ensure our military has the funding it needs to train, equip, and confront the threats we face from terrorist groups like ISIL and countries like Iran.

We know that preventing another crisis in military readiness will require significant investments over the near, medium, and the long term. For instance, our air campaign over Syria and Iraq has our Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force flying sorties that will further stress the readiness of the force, and those planes need to be maintained, repaired, and ultimately replaced. We know there is much to be done, but we also know this legislation represents a critical step forward. It would finally ensure our military has more of the funding it needs to train, equip, and confront the threats we face from terrorist groups like ISIL and countries like Iran.

We know this legislation would honor our veterans by funding the health care and benefits they rely on. We know it would enact critical reforms to help address the crises we have seen at the VA.

We know this legislation would, at a time of new and evolving terror threats, bring badly needed reform to the Visa Waiver Program. We know it would bolster the FBI's ability to confront terror within our borders.

We know this legislation would prevent—I repeat, prevent—the transfer of dangerous terrorists from Guantánamo's secure detention center into our communities.

We also know this legislation would enact an important cyber security information sharing measure. It is clear that countries such as Russia, China, and Iran are determined to continue launching cyber attacks against us. We know that the administration already succumbed to a devastating cyber attack just recently. It is time to provide the American people with some long-overdue protection.

The legislation before us would go a long way toward strengthening our national security in a dangerous world. Its provisions will help advance other important conservative priorities, too, like strengthening the First Amendment and helping protect families from a health care law that attacks the middle class.

This legislation would, in the wake of the Obama administration's conservative speech-suppression scandal, enact important reforms at the IRS and force it to root out waste. These reforms will help prevent another Lois Lerner, and they would help ensure that IRS employees who target Americans for their political beliefs are actually fired.

This legislation would strip out more pieces of a partisan law that hurts the middle class. One newspaper said the measure before us would "take an ax" to a "key pillar" of ObamaCare. It would prevent a taxpayer bailout of ObamaCare as well. The administration pushed hard to reverse that last provision but did not succeed.

The legislation before us would root out waste, fraud, and abuse. It would consolidate or terminate dozens—literally dozens—of programs. It would make long-overdue reforms to our Tax Code and contains pro-life and pro-Second Amendment protections as well.

So, in my view, here is the bottom line: This legislation is worth supporting. It doesn't mean this is the legislation I would have written on my own. It doesn't mean this is the legislation Speaker RYAN would have written on his own either. It is not perfect, and we certainly didn't get everything we wanted. But it made strides in it defending our Nation at a time of global unrest. It advances conservative priorities in several areas and enacts significant reform in several areas on everything from tax relief to energy policy to cyber security.

I plan to vote for it. I hope colleagues will choose to do the same.

Before I leave the floor, I wish to acknowledge the impressive work of the chairman of the Finance Committee, Senator ORRIN HATCH, on the tax side of this issue. Permanent reform was never going to be easy to come by, but this thoughtful legislator, Senator HATCH, never gave up, and he and his staff continued to work on this issue for a very long time. The result is a significant accomplishment for American families and the American economy, and I can't thank Senator HATCH enough.

RECOGNITION OF THE DEMOCRATIC LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

RELATIONSHIP OF THE MAJORITY AND DEMOCRATIC LEADERS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, before the Republican leader leaves the floor, I wish to say a few things.

In the years I have served in public office, I brush aside most press and don't let it bother me, but once in a while something comes along that does. There was an article in one of the Hill newspapers this day that really troubled me: "Bad blood: Reid-McConnell relationship hits new low."

I have a difficult job, and so does he. We both have done our respective jobs. We started out in leadership positions here doing different things, but where we first started working closely together was when we were both whips.

No one knows our personal relationship except him and me. There are things he does that disappoint me; there are things I do that disappoint him. Our caucuses have different views on a lot of things.

I just want the record to be spread that the Reid-McConnell relationship hasn't hit a new low. We have a personal relationship. Nobody knows how many times we visit with each other on the telephone and personally.

I will always remember him and his wonderful wife. Within the last few years my wife was involved in a terrible automobile accident. The first people to step up and ask if there was anything they could do were MITCH and his wife. Shortly thereafter, my wife had a bruising battle with breast cancer. There is no one who can comfort a wife more than another wife. On January 1 of this year, I blinded myself in an exercise accident, and MITCH McCONNELL was there. His wife was there.

So I want the record to reflect—people might write all these things they want to write, but MITCH McCONNELL and I are friends. People may think that is difficult with all the things we do here opposing each other, but that is the job we have.

I want the record—I repeat—to be totally reflective of the fact that I have admiration for MITCH McCONNELL and the work that he has to do. Do I always agree with what he does? Of course not. I am sure the same applies to his feelings about me. But no one can judge what our personal relationship is except McCONNELL and REID.

Mr. McCONNELL. Will my friend yield for a comment?

Mr. REID. Yes.

Mr. McCONNELL. I am always frustrated, as I think the Democratic leader is, with the tendency to personalize political differences. Obviously we have differences on issues, but I want to second what my friend the Democratic leader said: There is nothing wrong with our personal relationship, whether it is watching Nats baseball or a lot of other things that we have discussed both personally and otherwise for literally years.

I share the Senator's frustration, I would say to my friend, over an article like that. I think there is a tendency to think you can't have political arguments without developing personal animosity, and I don't have any toward my friend, and I know he doesn't have any toward me.