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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.

Merciful God, enthroned far above all powers, thank You for the gift of another day. Help us to use this borrowed time wisely. Forgive us when we forget that You are still on Your throne and that the hearts of humanity are in Your hands. Remind our lawmakers

that Your sovereignty is far above any conceivable command, authority, or control. May this knowledge of Your unstoppable providence motivate them to contribute to peace in our time.

Bless the members of our military and their families, surrounding them all with the shield of Your Divine favor. Lord, bless also those who are ill and in pain, poor and in need, worried and in distress, discouraged and in despair, tempted and in danger.

We pray in Your merciful 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 (Mrs. CAPITO). The majority leader is recognized.

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.

All material for insertion must be signed by the Member and delivered to the respective offices of the Official Reporters of Debates (Room HT-59 or S-123 of the Capitol), Monday through Friday, between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. through Wednesday, December 30. The final issue will be dated Thursday, December 31, 2015, and will be delivered on Monday, January 4, 2016.

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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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S8837

INTERNATIONAL MEGAN'S LAW TO PREVENT DEMAND FOR CHILD SEX TRAFFICKING

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding passage of H.R. 515, the committee-reported title amendment be agreed to.

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

The committee-reported title amendment was agreed to, as follows:

Amend the title so as to read: “An Act to protect children and others from sexual abuse and exploitation, including sex trafficking and sex tourism, by providing advance notice of intended travel by registered sex offenders outside the United States to the government of the country of destination, requesting foreign governments to notify the United States when a known sex offender is seeking to enter the United States, and for other purposes.”

OMNIBUS LEGISLATION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, we know our constituents are deeply concerned about America’s struggling economy. So let’s take steps, as the legislation we will consider proposes, to support more jobs, more opportunity, and more economic growth.

Let’s enact permanent tax relief for American families and small businesses. Let’s set the table for pro-growth tax reform. Let’s permanently eliminate an energy policy from the 1970s that not only costs American jobs but also strengthens America’s adversaries like Iran and Russia. This will end the absurd position we are in now, where the Iranians, as a result of the President’s deal, can export oil and the United States can’t.

Here is something else. We know our constituents are deeply concerned about America’s national security. So let’s take steps, as the legislation we will consider proposes, to strengthen our national security in a dangerous world. Let’s help ensure our military has more of the funding it needs to train, equip, and confront the threats that face us from literally every corner of the globe. Let’s bolster the FBI’s ability to confront terror within our borders. Let’s bring badly needed reform to the Visa Waiver Program. The last provision is especially important. Let’s prevent the transfer of dangerous terrorists from Guantanamo’s secure detention center into America’s communities. Let’s provide the people we represent with some long overdue protection from cyber attacks. Let’s honor our veterans and enact critical reforms to help address the crises we have seen at the VA.

The legislation we will consider today would take steps to strengthen our economy and strengthen our national security. It would also bolster the First Amendment. It would attack key pillars of ObamaCare and prevent a taxpayer bailout of this partisan law. That last provision is especially important. Protecting the middle class from

financing a bailout of ObamaCare means we are likely to speed up America’s day of liberation from ObamaCare as well.

So here is my view. This legislation helps our economy, helps our national security, and strikes more blows to a partisan health law that hurts the middle class. I think it is legislation worth supporting.

SENATE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, before I leave the floor, I would like to say something about last year. The American people voted for a new majority last November. We were humbled to have their support and take the Senate in a new direction. The Senate has made great strides in the year since. I think we have shown how the Senate can not only get back to work, but also return to a place of higher purpose.

We have committees working again. We opened up the legislative process. We gave Senators from both parties more of a say. As a result, we have gotten a lot done for the American people.

There are numbers that help tell the story, such as the fact that this Senate allowed 200 rollcall votes compared to just 15 last year. But it is the substance of what we passed that truly shows what a new and more open Senate can achieve for the American people: replacing No Child Left Behind with the most significant K-12 education reform in more than a dozen years; addressing crumbling roads and bridges with the first long-term Transportation bill in a decade; a balanced budget for the first time since 2001; help for our veterans; hope for the victims of modern slavery; modernizing changes for our military and its acquisition systems; and notable, bipartisan reforms for programs like Medicare—reforms that set a precedent for further positive action in the future.

We brought a permanent end to more of Washington’s artificial cliffs and manufactured dramas by working toward real reform instead of just temporary patches, and we will do that again today. We will enact permanent tax relief for families and small businesses. We will bring an end to a job-destroying, 40-year ban on energy exports. We will finally pass landmark cyber security legislation after years of Senate inaction. And just last night, we passed the first significant environmental reform bill in decades, one that will create more certainty for businesses and ensure uniform safety standards for products our families use.

This is all very good news for the American people. Nearly all the policies I mentioned were, or will be, signed into law by the President.

Others, while important, do not have his support. That includes legislation to rescue the middle class from the pain of ObamaCare, to support Keystone’s energy jobs, and to protect Kentucky’s small businesses and coal families from Washington’s regulatory assault.

It is now clear that it will take a new President—a new President—to achieve those things for the American people. But we are proving that you can still get a lot done with a President from a different party. We are proving you can actually enact significant, long-term reforms, achieve conservative policy goals, and get them signed into law.

I am proud of what the new Senate has accomplished. I wish to thank the many friends across the aisle who joined us in passing so many bipartisan reforms for the American people. We are not only putting the Senate back to work; we are putting it back on the side of the American people.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

OMNIBUS LEGISLATION

Mr. REID. Madam President, the accomplishments of the first session of this Senate has been a demonstration of what can happen when the minority is not trying to block everything. There has been no need this last year for scores and scores of cloture petitions being filed because we didn’t block things; we rarely did that. In the past, of course, it was done all the time. So we have demonstrated that it is important to have a minority that is responsible.

Of course, we know the issues that have passed this year are issues that we worked on for a number of years and that had been blocked by Republicans. We are glad to have been part of this Congress and able to move forward on a number of issues that have been languishing for a long time.

Of course, next year we need to do more for the middle class. There are lots of things that we haven’t been able to do and should do—minimum wage, making sure that my daughter and my granddaughter are paid the same as a man who does the same work.

We also have to understand that the lack of college affordability is crushing our country. It is often said it is a larger debt than credit cards, and we have to do something to relieve that pressure on the American people.

It is often said that legislation is the art of compromise, and I know that is true. Crafting bipartisan legislation is hard, tedious work. It requires a complex calibration of competing interests, needs, and realities. The legislation that will soon be before this body, the combined omnibus spending bill and tax extenders package, is a perfect example of a bipartisan compromise wrought in good faith.

It wasn’t easy. In fact, coming to an agreement on this package was a painstaking endeavor by Senate and House leaders and by House and Senate Members, but it was especially hard for our staffs. I am so appreciative of their exceptionally good work. I know it meant