



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 114th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 162

WASHINGTON, TUESDAY, MARCH 8, 2016

No. 37

House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Thursday, March 10, 2016, at 11:30 a.m.

Senate

TUESDAY, MARCH 8, 2016

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.

God of grace and glory, You are the source of all life. You have challenged us to number our days, not our weeks, months or years. Give us the wisdom to comprehend the brevity and uncertainty of our life's journey, motivating us to plan not only for time but eternity.

Lord, forgive us when we boast about tomorrow, forgetting that our times are in Your hands.

Today, bless our lawmakers and their staffs. Remind them that they belong to You and that You will order their steps. As they wrestle with complex issues, help them seek Your wisdom and guidance. Empower them as stewards of Your bounty to serve You and humanity, striving to be faithful in the vocation to which You have called them.

We pray in Your sacred 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. COTTON). The majority leader is recognized.

COMPREHENSIVE ADDICTION AND RECOVERY BILL

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, the junior Senator from New Hampshire delivered a powerful address to our Nation this weekend. She spoke about the need to tackle a heroin and prescription opioid epidemic that is impacting not just her State, not just my State, but communities all across our country.

Senator AYOTTE correctly called this a "life or death issue" and talked about what she has been doing to address it. She also talked about important legislation the Senate is considering that would help address the problem.

I was proud to see the Senate vote yesterday to advance the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act. It is bipartisan legislation that colleagues in both parties—like the junior Senator from New Hampshire, her colleague from Minnesota, and, of course, the lead sponsors from Ohio and Rhode Island—have worked hard to advance.

I want to especially thank the lead Republican sponsor of this bill, the junior Senator from Ohio, Mr. PORTMAN, for all the work he has done on this critical legislation. The same is true for the senior Senator from Iowa, Mr. GRASSLEY, who worked to move this bill quickly through the committee that he chairs.

Let's not forget the Senators in both parties who worked with the bill managers to process the kind of amendments both sides agree would make a good bill even better. Because of the dedicated leadership of Senators from both sides of the aisle, we will soon have the opportunity to actually pass this important legislation.

I urge colleagues to join me in voting to do so. The Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act is important legislation that will help tackle this crisis at every level. It is a good bill, it enjoys strong bipartisan support, and it builds upon a foundation we laid just a few months ago when we appropriated \$400 million to opioid-specific programs—money that still remains available to be spent.

This bipartisan legislation also comes at a time when our Nation needs it most. My home State of Kentucky has been among the hardest hit by this epidemic, with more people dying from drug overdoses than car crashes.

As the junior Senator from New Hampshire reminded us in her address this weekend, these are not just numbers. "Behind every statistic and behind every headline is a life that has been lost," Senator AYOTTE said. "This is not a Republican or Democratic issue—it affects all of us."

I want to thank her and the lead Republican sponsor from Ohio for their important work. I thank their colleagues across the aisle from Rhode Island and Minnesota and the Judiciary Committee chairman from Iowa as well. Let's keep working together to pass the bipartisan CARA bill and take

• 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 step towards ending this devastating epidemic.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, under the Republican leader's direction, this Senate continues to make history for all the wrong reasons. Despite proclaiming that the Senate is back to work, the Republican majority is on pace to become one of the least productive Senates ever.

By now, most Americans are aware of the Republican leader's decision to block consideration of the Supreme Court nomination that President Obama will soon make. But the historic obstruction of a Supreme Court nominee is the most recent and prolific example of the Republican leader's abdication of his constitutional duties and that of the whole Republican caucus. What is that? To provide advice and consent to Presidential nominations.

Since his party assumed the majority in the Senate last January, the Republican leader and his colleagues have ground the nominations to a halt. According to the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service, the pace of judicial nominations being confirmed this Congress is the worst. To date, this Republican-controlled Senate has confirmed a total of 16 judicial nominations. That is about one a month. Since the beginning of the year, we have confirmed just five judges.

We have 11 judges pending on the Senate calendar, and there would be a lot more, but the chairman of the committee simply is not holding any hearings. He canceled the meeting last week. Maybe they will have one the day after tomorrow. They are not even holding hearings for the people in the pipeline whom the President has nominated. The 11 judges pending on the Senate calendar is not definitive of the real problem we have in this country. But even on the 11, the Republicans refuse to schedule votes—even on judges such as Waverly Crenshaw from Tennessee, who is supported by the two Republican Senators from Tennessee.

If the Republican leader will not even schedule votes on consensus judges recommended by Republican Senators, how can Democrats expect a vote on their recommendations?

While the Republican leader and the chairman of the Judiciary Committee seem content not to do their jobs, the American people are being robbed of justice. There has been a spike in judicial emergencies. If there aren't enough judges to hear the cases that arise, it is deemed to be an emergency because the judges there are unable to do the work because there are too few judges.

When the Republicans assumed control of the Senate last year, there were 12 judicial emergencies nationwide. Now there are 31—1 year later, 31. They are going up almost by the week. As I have indicated, that number will only grow as Republicans continue to refuse to process important judicial nominations. But the obstruction isn't limited to Supreme Court nominees or judges to fill these judicial emergencies. There are other matters that we should be concerned about.

Take, for example, the Banking Committee. It is setting records for doing nothing. The committee has been operating under the leadership of the senior Senator from Alabama. In that time, the committee has not yet reported a single nomination. This is unprecedented.

According to the Congressional Research Service, which is a nonpartisan group, the Banking Committee has reported out at least one nomination every year for the past 50 years—not now. It is the only Senate committee not to consider a single nomination last year. When asked why, he said he had other things to do.

What are those nominations that the Senator has put a hold on? What positions have gone unfilled as the chairman pursued his political career with the primary election just having been completed? The Under Secretary of Treasury for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence is really important and two seats on the Securities and Exchange Commission. We know that Wall Street needs to be monitored very closely. We have two seats that need to be filled. There are two seats on the Federal Reserve Board of Governors, and we know how important that is. There are the Director of the U.S. Mint and the Export-Import Bank Board of Directors. They can't do their work now because we need to fill those spots. There are the Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, the inspector general, and the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, and others.

From the Republican leader to his committee chairs and the rank and file, we continue to hear that the Senate is working again. This is a figment of the Republicans' imagination. It is not working again. It appears the Republican Senate isn't interested in doing its job. There no longer seems to be a voice of reason coming from the Republican side.

Isn't there a single Republican who will stand against the Republican leader's nominations blockade? Isn't there a single Republican willing to put an end to this historic obstruction? Providing advice and consent on the President's nominees is a constitutional duty. I say: Do your job.

FILLING THE SUPREME COURT VACANCY

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I have an article here from CNN. It is quite illuminating.

When I was a boy growing up in the town of Searchlight, we didn't have people of color—no one, ever. When I went away to high school, we did have people of color. There were not many, but certainly we had African Americans, and we had Hispanics. It wasn't until then, when I went to high school, that I had a wonderful Spanish teacher, Marlan Walker. I was able to visit with him when I went home last time to see him. He had lost his wife Colleen. He made such a difference in my life. But he is a fine man and was a great Spanish teacher. It was the first time I had ever heard anything about pinatas. What is a pinata? Traditionally, they have them in Mexico, where they have a figure. It can be all kinds of things, but let's say it is a horse. You blindfold young people. They have a stick in their hand, and they can't see. They know it is hung there; they saw it before they were blindfolded. They try to find the pinata so they can hit it because presents come out of it. Things come out of the pinata. But, boy, the pinata gets beaten until it starts dumping little presents on everyone's head.

This article, which came from what happened on CNN, would be illuminating for people to read. It is written by Ted Barrett, dated yesterday. When asked about Presidential nominees to the Supreme Court, the assistant Republican leader said: "I think they will bear some resemblance to a pinata."

Think about that. They don't know who the nominee is. They don't know anything about the person, but they already have in their mind that they are going to beat this person like a pinata. These are his words, not mine. Direct quote: "I think they will bear some resemblance to a pinata."

Think about that. He is saying Republicans are going to do all they can to hurt this person's reputation, to beat on them, like a pinata. He went on to say: "Because there is no guarantee, certainly, after that time they're going to look as good as they did going in." Think about that: to say to the American people that they refuse to meet with somebody they don't know, refuse to have a committee hearing on someone they don't know, refuse to have a vote in the committee, and refuse to have a vote on this floor.

Now the assistant Republican leader has told us that it doesn't matter who it is. It doesn't matter if the nominee is a man, woman, old, or young. It doesn't matter what their education is or what their experience is, they are going to beat that person like a pinata. I think they have been listening to Donald Trump too much. The Republicans need to stop and listen to the disgusting rhetoric they are spewing. They are going to treat someone they don't even know like a pinata?

Now the Republicans are reduced to acting like big, tough people and threatening to destroy the reputation of someone they don't even know. They