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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.

O God, our refuge and strength, give us reverence for Your greatness. Guide our Senators around the pitfalls of their work, enabling them to have hearts sustained by Your peace. May they surrender their will to You as they trust You to direct their path. Lord, give them the wisdom to receive Your reproof with the understanding that You chastise those whom You love for their good. Undergird them with Your enabling might as You make their lives productive for the glory of Your 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. PAUL). The majority leader is recognized.

SEVERE WEATHER IN WESTERN KENTUCKY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I wish to say a few words about the severe weather that hit my home State of Kentucky yesterday. A large tornado touched down in Mayfield in Graves County in Western Kentucky. It damaged homes and businesses and reportedly injured 10 people as it made its way through that part of my State.

Tornadoes were also reported in Muhlenberg and Union Counties. Thankfully, no deaths have been reported in Kentucky as of the latest news reports. Kentuckians are, as always, reaching out to help their neighbors in times of distress, with reports that local churches and businesses have opened their doors to those displaced by the tornadoes as they recover.

We are thinking today of all the Kentuckians who have been hurt by this severe weather. We continue to monitor the situation, and we are thankful that the damage that has been reported so far was not worse.

ENERGY AND WATER DEVELOPMENT APPROPRIATIONS BILL

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, after much hard work, research, and deliberation from both sides of the aisle, we are closer to having an opportunity to pass the first funding bill of the appropriations season, the energy security and water infrastructure funding bill.

I know Members have some differences of opinion about an amendment authored by Senator COTTON, but this is how the legislative process is supposed to work. Senator COTTON's amendment, which would prevent future funds to purchase heavy water from Iran, is germane to this funding bill, and it deserves a vote.

We are going to have that vote today, allowing Senators from both sides to have their say on this issue and allowing us to move forward on this important measure.

The energy security and water infrastructure funding bill will positively impact every State in America. We know it includes important measures to support energy research and innovation to promote public safety, to maintain waterway infrastructure, and to promote nuclear security.

Let's work to advance this bill and keep the appropriations process moving forward in a responsible manner.

AMERICAN MANUFACTURING COMPETITIVENESS AND DEFEND TRADE SECRETS BILLS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, yesterday the Senate passed the American Manufacturing Competitiveness Act, a bipartisan bill that—as my friend, the chairman of the Finance Committee, observed—shows our “commitment to helping our economy with more jobs, bigger paychecks, and a stronger American manufacturing base.”

Later today the President will sign into law the Defend Trade Secrets Act, another Senate-passed bill that promotes our economy and helps create and retain American jobs. Both of these bills are the result of the work of two dedicated committee chairmen, Senator HATCH and Senator GRASSLEY. They are also the result of a Senate that is back to work for the American people.

I thank the Finance Committee and Judiciary Committee chairmen for their efforts to advance these bills, just as I thank Senators BURR, PORTMAN, TOOMEY, and FLAKE for their diligent work to help support American businesses and the economy through their efforts to pass the American Manufacturing Competitiveness Act.

THE ECONOMY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, President Obama recently bragged to the New York Times Magazine about his performance on the economy. He boasted about his economic legacy and actually claimed that, by his estimation, the administration managed the economic recovery better than any peer economy facing a financial crisis—now listen to this—“on Earth in modern history.” Well, that is a quote to remember.

The same day this story hit, the Bureau of Economic Analysis released its first quarter report showing only 0.5 percent economic growth. It is the latest reminder of the actual economy

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



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that Americans are forced to confront day in and day out.

President Obama has presided over the worst economic recovery since World War II. Growth is anemic, wages are stagnant for too many, poverty is up for too many, jobs are scarce for too many, and Americans are losing faith in the future.

Somehow President Obama doesn't seem to think any of this is his problem or a problem at all. The issue isn't his policies or his refusal to work across the aisle on solutions. No, to him it is just a messaging problem. It is just that he was too busy to "take victory laps" or explain things properly.

He believes "the U.S. economy is in much better shape than the public appreciates." As the magazine story I mentioned previously observes, in fact, he claims that "by almost every economic measure, we are significantly better off."

Well, many in the middle class feel quite differently. Just don't take my word for it. Here is what Bill Clinton thinks of the Obama administration economy. He said: "Millions and millions and millions of millions of people look at that pretty picture of America he painted and they cannot find themselves in it to save their lives."

That is Bill Clinton on the Obama economy. Hard-working middle class families simply cannot find themselves in the picture this President has painted of the American economy.

Median household incomes have shrunk under this President. Too many Americans have given up even looking for work altogether, after years of failed attempts.

One survey found that more than half of Americans say that "the next generation will be worse off than them financially."

The middle class has now shrunk to such an extent under President Obama that it no longer contains the majority of Americans. That is something none of us should take comfort in.

I will read a quote from the President. I am not sure he intended it, but President Obama said something a few months ago that seemed to sum up his economic legacy. He said: "There was a time I think when upward mobility was the hallmark of America."

He is right. There was a time. There can be a time again.

We don't have to accept the Obama economy as the new normal in our country. Democrats may want middle-class families to keep their gaze down and their expectations tempered, but we have a right to expect more in this country. We have a right to believe in our future. It is clear we need a change to get America moving again.

The Republican-led Senate will continue to look for and pass real solutions that aim to get our economy back on track—solutions to help foster economic growth, solutions to help create jobs and strengthen our workforce,

and solutions to help America prosper once more.

If President Obama wants to actually build an economic legacy for himself and not just try to spin Americans on one, then I invite him to finally join us.

My Republican colleagues will have more to say on the economy this afternoon.

I thank my colleague Senator SULLIVAN, who has been outspoken on this important matter.

I also thank Senator COATS for his work to strengthen our economic policies as chairman of the Joint Economic Committee, as well as a member of the Finance Committee.

These Senators know the costly toll the Obama economy has had on people in their home States, and they are working to address it.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

COMMENDING BRAD HATCHER

Mr. REID. Mr. President, Brad Hatcher, who is serving as my legislative fellow for defense issues this year, has done a terrific job. We are so fortunate to have the military we do have, and he exemplifies that.

THE ECONOMY

Mr. REID. Mr. President, it is interesting to hear my friend fictionalize what is going on in the world economy and in our American economy especially.

We all know that when President Obama took office—the month after he was elected in November, 8 years ago—the economy lost 800,000 jobs. It was not 1 month. That continued. When President Bush took over the economy, we had a surplus of \$10 trillion over 10 years—a surplus.

My friend the Presiding Officer and, frankly, his good father have talked about money that was spent by this country that shouldn't have been.

However, when Bush took office, we had a surplus. We had a balanced budget under Bill Clinton—a balanced budget. We didn't need to legislate it. It happened. Of course, with his leadership and the Deficit Reduction Act that we passed, it worked out very well.

But that was all wiped out by the spending of the Bush administration. It was 8 years of 2 wars unpaid for and trillions of dollars—not hundreds of billions but trillions of dollars—paid for with a credit card. Tax cuts were paid for with a credit card.

What did that bring to us? The collapse of Wall Street.

President Obama went to work. It was difficult, but we passed the American Recovery Act, or the stimulus, as

it was known. But for that, who knows how difficult our situation would be.

In Nevada, we had the experience of what happened when Wall Street collapsed. We weren't the only State. It happened all over this Nation. For my friend to talk about how great the economy was during the Bush years is simply fictional.

Are things perfect now? Of course not. We have had no help in the Senate. We had very little help in the House. For 7½ years, all Republicans have done is try to oppose—they didn't try; they opposed—everything President Obama has attempted to do. We have been able to overcome some of that.

Since Obama took office, the U.S. economy saw the longest stretch of private sector growth in its history, and it is still ongoing.

There were some complaints last month that only 160,000 jobs were created. That was 160,000 compared to 800,000 being lost during the Bush administration. We need to do more. There is no question about that, but we need some help.

Republicans are doing everything they can—and they have proven that in the last 7½ years—to make it tough for President Obama.

We have a lot of people who aren't being paid enough. How about those people working on minimum wage and trying to survive? Yet Republicans refuse to help us raise that.

How about paycheck fairness so that my daughter and my granddaughters are paid the same amount of money for the same work they do that a man does?

Student debt is unbearable. I am seeing it now with my grandchildren. It is incredible. You are going to have to go borrow money.

It is Republicans who stood in the way of recovery in so many different ways. So let's talk about the real world—not a fictional world.

FILLING THE SUPREME COURT VACANCY

Mr. REID. Mr. President, last week, the senior Senator from Iowa confirmed what Democrats have said all along: Senate Republicans want Donald Trump to fill the Supreme Court vacancy.

I am sorry to direct my attention to the Presiding Officer, but I can't imagine how the Presiding Officer must feel with Donald Trump being the leader of the Republican Party. I can't imagine. I can't imagine what your good father thinks of Donald Trump leading the Republican Party, but I can imagine, and I have a number of times.

In an interview with the Des Moines Register, Iowa's largest newspaper, Senator GRASSLEY said of Trump: "Based upon the type of people [Donald Trump would] be looking for, I think I would expect the right type of people to be nominated by him to the Supreme Court."

That is fairly shocking, coming from a Senator who should know better. The