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Senate

The Senate met at 2 p.m. and was called to order by the Honorable LISA MURKOWSKI, a Senator from the State of Alaska.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, who preserves our Nation with the power of Your might, we lift our hearts in praise. We are grateful for Your unfailing love and faithfulness because Your promises are backed by the honor of Your Name. We place our hope in You and remember daily how You have sustained us in the past.

Lord, give our Senators the wisdom to trust You in the small things, realizing that faithfulness with the least prepares them for fidelity with the much. May they trust You to do what is best for America in good times and in bad. Look down from Heaven on the entire human family and give us Your peace.

We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer 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.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, May 16, 2016.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby

appoint the Honorable LISA MURKOWSKI, a Senator from the State of Alaska, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ORRIN G. HATCH,
President pro tempore.

Ms. MURKOWSKI thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

NATIONAL POLICE WEEK

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, this week we commemorate National Police Week and pay tribute to the local, State, and Federal law enforcement officers who keep our country and our communities safe. We are grateful for their service and for their sacrifice. We benefit from their pledge to serve, protect, and defend.

I had the pleasure recently of meeting with several officers from Richmond, KY, who were in town for the events of police week. I also met with the families of Kentucky police officers who laid down their lives in the line of duty. Tragically, five officers from the Bluegrass State were lost in 2015: on March 5, Lieutenant Clifford Scott Travis of the Bullitt County Detention Center; on March 11, Officer Burke Jevon Rhoads of the Nicholasville Police Department; on June 23, State Trooper Eric Keith Chrisman; on September 13, State Trooper Joseph Cameron Ponder; and on November 6, Senior Patrol Officer Daniel Neil Ellis of the Richmond Police Department.

The names of these five officers, along with the names of hundreds of other brave officers from across the country, have been added to our national monument to law enforcement officers lost in the line of duty—the National Law Enforcement Officers

Memorial. The names of over 500 Kentuckians appear on the memorial, and more than 20,000 names from across the country appear in all.

That includes the four Capitol police officers we have lost in the line of duty since 1994. The Capitol police recently held a ceremony to honor their fallen officers. It reminds us of the continuing sacrifices of the men and women who stand guard every day at the very heart of our democracy. We are grateful for their service.

I am a proud cosponsor of the resolution to recognize National Police Week this year. The resolution recognizes the work of active-duty law enforcement officers, the 25th anniversary of the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial, the 15th anniversary of 9/11, and all the officers lost in the line of duty in 2015.

I am also a proud cosponsor of the Fallen Heroes Flag Act. This bill would create a program to provide flags that have been flown over the Capitol to the immediate family members of law enforcement and public safety officers who were lost in the line of duty. This bill has passed both the House and the Senate and is awaiting the President's signature.

I am also a cosponsor, with my friend the senior Senator from Texas, of the POLICE Act. The POLICE Act would expand COPS grants so that those grants could be used for active-shooter training and to help equip law enforcement to respond to events like the San Bernardino shootings. Passing the POLICE Act would help give our police officers the training they need to do their jobs more effectively. I am hopeful we can quickly move to this important legislation.

I am proud to represent Kentucky's police officers here in the Senate. Law enforcement is very dangerous work. It is also a noble calling, and I am grateful for the service of every police officer in Kentucky and across the Nation. I know my colleagues share my deep

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



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admiration and respect for police officers everywhere.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT *pro tempore*. The Democratic leader is recognized.

NATIONAL POLICE WEEK

Mr. REID. Madam President, I join the Republican leader in recognizing the contributions of law enforcement officers all around this country. I am sorry that they have such a tough job, and I don't think we appreciate them enough. So I appreciate what the Republican leader said. In Nevada, we too have had our share of these awful instances where these men and women are killed needlessly.

ZIKA VIRUS AND NOMINATION OF MERRICK GARLAND

Mr. REID. Madam President, what we know today is that the Zika virus was first discovered in 1947 in Uganda. It was first detected in monkeys, but in 1947 they also learned that the mosquito was now carrying this same virus the monkeys had. Initially, we didn't know or hear much about Zika. But we have heard plenty now, and we are going to hear a lot more.

Researchers named the virus Zika because that is where the mosquito carrying the virus was discovered, in the Zika Forest of Uganda, as I mentioned. The Ugandan term "zika" means "overgrown." So these mosquitoes with this virus were discovered in an overgrown forest in Uganda. Now, seven decades later, Zika is an international emergency, and countries are scrambling to address the problems created by this mosquito that bites. What I have learned is that there is more than one type of mosquito; there are two.

Already Zika-carrying mosquitoes have transmitted the disease to American citizens in Puerto Rico and other United States territories. Soon, mosquitoes carrying this virus will be biting and infecting people in the continental United States. That is not hyperbole. It is going to happen. Zika-carrying mosquitoes won't be limited to the gulf coast.

Madam President, look at this map. You can't see it very well on this, but you can see the discoloration here, the original coloring that we have. We have the blue, and we have the orange and the gray. Now, I was really surprised. I thought this would really be in the subtropical climates here in the United States, in the southern part of our country. I thought that is where it would be, but you can see that is not the case.

Nevada is here, and Las Vegas is here. There are over 2 million people living there. It is all over the United

States. Boulder, CO, is up here. Puerto Rico and Hawaii are here.

This map is from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and it shows the estimated range of the two types of Zika-carrying mosquitoes. Areas of this map, as I have indicated, are three in color and cover 39 States. Most of these States, as I have indicated, don't have subtropical weather. Nevada, Colorado, Wisconsin, Ohio, Kentucky, New Hampshire, and Maine are listed.

Health officials are desperate to stop Zika, this devastating virus that has been around so long but it was not known to carry all the many problems it now carries. It causes birth defects and other deadly conditions.

Last week, a report on NPR described what Zika does to the brain as it begins to grow. This is one condition:

As the brain . . . starts to grow, it creates pressure, which pushes on the skull and causes it to grow. But if something stops brain growth—such as [the Zika] virus—pressure on the skull drops. And the skull can collapse down onto the brain.

Two weeks ago we had people come to explain this to my caucus, and they described these skulls that just collapse. But Zika isn't only linked to birth defects. As I have indicated, the virus is also associated with a nervous system disorder that can result in paralysis, among other problems.

Yet, in spite of all the devastating impacts of Zika, I am sorry to say, the Republicans in Congress don't see this virus as an urgent issue. Months ago, President Obama requested almost \$2 billion to fight Zika, and for the same months the Republicans have refused to give the money America needs to fight this crisis.

The best time to deal with any crisis is before it is here, but Republicans have dragged their feet. We should have passed an emergency spending bill months ago—months ago. We need to address Zika in the territories and give States and local governments the resources they are begging for.

Last Thursday, appropriators filed an amendment that would provide \$1.1 billion in Zika funding. That simply is not enough. This isn't about negotiating an arbitrary number made up by lawmakers. Our public health officials have made it clear they need that money.

Senate Republicans are giving our government half of what it needs to fight this ravaging virus. This is beyond reckless. House Republicans are even doing less. The chairman of the House Committee on Appropriations last week said that Republicans are working on a Zika funding measure, but what House Republicans are proposing is even less than about half of the already low \$1.1 billion amendment from Senate appropriators.

Republicans are trying to haggle as if this is some sort of bidding war. That is not how Congress should react to a potentially disastrous health crisis. We know what is going on in Puerto Rico.

We know. Because of Republicans' refusal to lift a finger to help fight the Zika crisis, the administration was forced to use Ebola funds in order to fight Zika now. They had to take about \$510 million that was set aside specifically for Ebola.

Two years ago, America was afraid of Ebola. Ebola is still a killer, and we invested in supporting public health infrastructures to prevent future outbreaks like the one we saw, as I indicated, 2 years ago. We need to replenish these monies so we can continue to work on vaccines and other things, but Republicans are standing in the way.

It is really a sad commentary on Republicans that when asked for emergency funding to protect millions of Americans, they respond by offering half of what is needed. This is in a spending bill, and then we have to go to the House and have a conference. In the meantime, people are begging for this money. Republicans should be ashamed that we aren't doing everything in our power to protect the American people from this virus now. We should have an emergency spending bill on the floor now. If it were a flood or a fire that occurred, we would have been here. It is just too bad because this is a crisis that is already here. It is not an emerging crisis. It is here.

Madam President, last week, the Republican leader came to the floor and here is what he said: "We have elections in this country right on time, and that is not an excuse not to do our work."

Again: "We have elections in this country right on time, and that is not an excuse not to do our work."

That is what Senator MCCONNELL said. So I say to my friend from Kentucky: I agree. Elections are no excuse not to do our work. So Senate Republicans should do their job and give Supreme Court nominee Merrick Garland a hearing and a vote.

There is clearly no question that Merrick Garland is experienced and qualified to be a nominee. He is the nominee, and he has the expertise to go along with what a Supreme Court nominee should have. Throughout his decades as a prosecutor and judge, Mr. Garland has proven himself to be committed to the rule of law and following it. That is more than I can say for my Republican colleagues who, by refusing to consider this nominee, are rejecting their constitutional duties.

The Republican leader needs to practice what he preaches. He says that elections shouldn't interfere with our Senate duties. He should prove it. The Republican Senators should prove that. Put aside Presidential elections, put aside Donald Trump, put aside all the phony excuses, and give Merrick Garland the consideration he deserves. Study Judge Garland's questionnaire; it is here. Analyze his record; it is here. Give him a hearing and send his nomination to the floor now.

As the Republican leader put it, "We have elections in this country right on