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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.

Almighty God, who blesses us beyond what we deserve, we place our trust in You. Because of You, our future is brighter than we can imagine. Thank You for Your unfailing love and compassion, which You have shown from long ages past.

Continue to protect our Nation and world. Lord, give our lawmakers the grace to cherish and cultivate the virtues and values that make a nation great. Save our Senators from those transgressions that bring national ruin. May they keep ever before them Your vision for the people they serve and strive to leave the world better than they found it.

We pray in Your great 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.

ZIKA VIRUS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, we all agree that the Zika virus is a real threat and needs to be addressed. Republicans and Democrats worked together to pass a bill here in the Senate to provide funding and resources. The

House passed its own version. We are now ready to go to conference and complete a final bill. I will have more to say on that soon, but I appreciate the hard work of Members on both sides of the aisle in crafting the Senate's response.

FRANK R. LAUTENBERG CHEMICAL SAFETY FOR THE 21ST CENTURY ACT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, after months of hard work and collaboration between both Chambers, last night we were able to pass the first major environmental reform bill in two decades. I know Bonnie Lautenberg has waited for this day for a very long time. The Lautenberg act bears her husband's name and will go a long way toward modernizing our Nation's chemical safety regulations. It will look out for public safety, enhance transparency, and help support manufacturing and our economy. It is good legislation that languished for years until a new Senate majority made it a renewed priority. I want to thank Senators INHOFE and VITTER for all their work with Senators UDALL and MARKEY to move this important measure forward. Its passage represents the latest example of how the Senate is back to work for the American people.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION BILL

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, on another important matter, the issue before us today, there are an array of threats facing our country. As the chairman of the Armed Services Committee recently observed, "[I]nstead of one great power rival, the United States now faces a series of trans-regional, cross-functional, multi-domain, and long-term strategic competitions."

There are the conventional military challenges, such as adversaries who have been developing and modernizing

their missiles, airframes, ships, and ground forces; there are the asymmetric threats, such as cyber warfare, propaganda, and espionage; and there are nations, such as China, Iran, and Russia, which represent both conventional and asymmetric threats at the very same time.

If we are going to keep Americans safe, we have to prepare for all of these challenges. We have to modernize our defenses, keep up with technological advances, and recognize threats. Passing the National Defense Authorization Act before us would put our country on the path to doing these things. It is a reform bill that will encourage defense innovation. It is a forward-looking bill that will upgrade our missile defenses and modernize our military equipment. It is a responsible bill that will ensure that America's men and women in uniform receive more of the resources they need to confront the challenges of today and the threats of tomorrow.

As I have said before, we should use the remaining months of the Obama administration to prepare the next administration, whether Republican or Democratic, for the variety of challenges it will inherit. These are complex challenges without simple answers. Passing a pro-reform, pro-innovation, pro-modernization defense bill such as this one will leave us better equipped to solve them. It will leave us better equipped to keep Americans and our allies safe in the face of ever-evolving security challenges.

WELCOMING THE PRIME MINISTER OF INDIA

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, later today we will welcome the Prime Minister of India as he visits the Capitol. Although this is Narendra Modi's fourth trip to the United States as Prime Minister, it marks the first time he will address a joint meeting of Congress. It also marks the fifth time an Indian Prime Minister has done so

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



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since the 1980s. It shows how far our relationship has come in recent decades. Mutual misgivings have given way to mutual benefits in both the economic and security spheres. We are now key trading partners. We are the two largest democracies in the world. Our relationship is an important one, and there are more benefits that can be shared from future cooperation.

Today's address by Prime Minister Modi provides an important opportunity for all involved—an opportunity to hear his perspective on India's economic growth and how he feels we can strengthen the strategic partnership between our countries, an opportunity to learn more about his ideas for pursuing areas of common ground and advancing shared interests, and an opportunity to better understand his view of the challenges currently facing India and his outlook for overcoming them.

We welcome Prime Minister Modi. We are interested in learning more about his vision, both for India and for the country's continued partnership with the United States in the years ahead.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The minority leader is recognized.

WELCOMING THE PRIME MINISTER OF INDIA

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I join the Republican leader in welcoming the Prime Minister from India to America.

Mr. President, in my office I have a wonderful memento of my first meetings with Indians. I went to school at Utah State University in Logan, UT. It was so cold. My wife and I lived off campus, and we would drive a couple miles up a hill to the Utah State campus. Along the way, I would see Indian students walking to school. They were engineering students and agricultural students at the college. I would give them rides. I did that for a couple of years.

When it came time for me to graduate, one of the Indians I had gotten to know asked if Landra and I would be willing to stay over an extra day and they would make us a traditional Indian feast. We did that. It was a feast. They were dressed in their Indian garb. They had worked a lot on that food. It was the first Indian food we had eaten. We have eaten a lot of it since. It was a wonderful, warm occasion that we will always remember.

They gave us some presents, and with five children and moving quite a bit, most of those presents are history. I don't know what they were. But one that I have always protected is a little bone-carved statue of Gandhi that they gave me. He is in his regular clothes that we see him in. He has a staff in his hand like he had most of the time. It is finely carved. You can pull that staff out even today. It is a miracle that it

made it through my five children, but I have done everything I could to protect it. Now I have it in my office in a little glass enclosure, and I show my Indian guests that meaningful memento of mine.

The other reason I am going to have the opportunity in an hour or so to meet with the Prime Minister with Senator McCONNELL, the Speaker, and Leader PELOSI—I hope I have the opportunity to tell him of my fondness for Indians but especially those named Modi because the spokesperson's name from the group of Indians that I met was Modi. I have come to the realization in recent years that that was his last name. Everybody called him Modi. He was an engineer. He moved to New Jersey, and we kept in touch.

I am happy that the Prime Minister is going to be able to address our Nation in the House of Representatives, and I am sure his people look forward to that.

Again, I tell everyone here about my warmness for India, this great democracy. The second largest Muslim population in the world is in India. So it is a friend that we have, and we must maintain that friendship.

ZIKA VIRUS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I just left a meeting, a stunningly important meeting where every one of the guests were prominent, but the two I want to refer to briefly are Dr. Frieden, head of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and Dr. Fauci, head of one of the health institutes at the National Institutes of Health, Infectious Diseases, among other things. What they told us was very frightening. As we speak, there are three confirmed cases of babies born in the United States with the Zika virus. Of course, they are all very sick. The life expectancy is not very long.

They said in unison how vitally important it is and has been for months to get them some money so they can do the research needed to stop the spread of this virus. They have borrowed money from malaria research, TB research—all terribly difficult problems we are having in the world and the United States—to take care of the immediate funding for research on Zika. They have taken huge amounts of money—more than half a billion dollars—out of the Ebola fund, which is still a very serious problem. There are active cases as we speak.

This is not an effort we can just walk away from. This money has been needed for a long time, and it is sad that the Presidential request of \$1.9 billion has been opposed.

The senior Senator from Florida was at the meeting today talking about how every day there are new cases in Florida. Yesterday there were five new ones. We needed to do something on that yesterday, not wait until the fall, as has been suggested by my Republican colleagues.

DONALD TRUMP AND FILLING THE SUPREME COURT VACANCY

Mr. REID. Mr. President, Senate Republicans are waiting with gleeful anticipation for Donald Trump to fill the vacancy on the Supreme Court. Donald Trump, who last week attacked a Federal judge because of his Mexican heritage—even though the judge was born in Indiana—said that District Judge Curiel shouldn't be allowed to preside on his case because of his ethnicity. Donald Trump, moments later, said that he would feel the same way if the judge were Muslim.

This is the man—Donald Trump—for whom Senate Republicans are blocking a supremely qualified nominee for the Supreme Court, a man by the name of Merrick Garland. This is the man—Donald Trump—for whom Republicans are abdicating their constitutional responsibility. This is the man—Donald Trump—whom Senate Republicans want to determine the makeup of the Supreme Court for at least the next generation.

The Senate Republicans are united in blocking Judge Merrick Garland's nomination to the Supreme Court. Republicans are united in refusing to provide their advice and consent to President Obama's nominee to the Supreme Court. The Republicans are united in doing it for Donald Trump. They say so. They should be ashamed.

It is hard to imagine anything more humiliating than holding a Supreme Court seat open so that Donald Trump can fill that seat. Is this why my Republican colleagues entered public service—to march in lockstep behind a man who spews hate and attacks the basic rule of law in America?

The Republican leader says: "We know that Donald Trump will make the right kind of Supreme Court appointments."

This is sad for the Republican Party. If my Republican colleagues aren't embarrassed, they aren't thinking very well.

President Obama has nominated a moderate, experienced, brilliant jurist to the Supreme Court, but instead of giving Judge Garland the impartial treatment he deserves, Republicans are refusing to do their jobs. And for what? So Donald Trump, a man who routinely insults Republican Senators to their faces, among others, denigrates Senator McCain's heroism, says people's heritage makes them unable to perform their jobs, and all the terrible stuff about women, handicapped people—we want this man to appoint someone to the Supreme Court? The Republicans should come to their senses. It is time to drop the charade and give Garland a fair hearing and a vote.

AMENDMENT NO. 4549

Mr. REID. Mr. President, on another subject, Americans share many common values, and one of the most fundamental is this: If you make a commitment, you should keep it. If you reach