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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.

Eternal Master, strengthen us so that we will live blameless lives, doing what is right and speaking the truth with sincere hearts. Forgive us when we listen to the cynical angels of our carnal nature, and renew in us a spirit of faith and optimism.

Empower our Senators to be true to their duties, making the commitment to labor with integrity. Lord, instruct them with Your wisdom, protect them with Your might, and guide them with Your love.

Chase away thoughts that bring discouragement and fear, as we remember that nothing is impossible for You.

We pray in Your mighty 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.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CRUZ). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

REMEMBERING SHIMON PERES

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, we were saddened to learn last night that

Shimon Peres, the ninth President of Israel, has passed away at the age of 93. He leaves behind a remarkable legacy of service on behalf of the people of Israel and a lengthy résumé to match. The Nobel Peace Prize, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the Congressional Gold Medal—Peres earned them all. In fact, I was honored to be a part of the ceremony to award him that Gold Medal just a few short years ago.

His political career is one that spans nearly seven decades and encompasses just about every high office imaginable: President, Prime Minister, peacemaker, revered statesman, and one of the last remaining connections to the founding of the modern State of Israel. This is how the world will remember Shimon Peres, but above all, we will remember him as the embodiment of a nation that the United States is privileged to call an ally and dear friend.

Our thoughts are with his family; with our friends, the people of Israel; and with the many others around the globe who mourn his passing today.

BUSINESS BEFORE THE SENATE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, moving on to the business before the Senate today, last week the President vetoed the Justice Against Sponsors of Terrorism Act. At noon today, the Senate will vote on whether to override his veto of that legislation. After this vote, Members should be prepared for votes on the continuing resolution.

Our colleagues in the House made good progress last night on a way forward to help the people of Flint in the Water Resources Development Act, or WRDA, which, as we have said, is the proper vehicle. The Senate already voted overwhelmingly—95 to 3—to pass assistance to Flint families as part of the WRDA bill, and both Chairman INHOFE and I have pledged to continue to pursue resources for Flint once WRDA goes to conference.

As a result, we are hopeful that we will soon reach an agreement with our Democratic colleagues to move forward on the clean CR-Zika package today. It includes important resources to support our veterans, to combat the Zika virus and heroin and prescription opioid crisis, and to serve as a significant downpayment for flood relief. It also funds all current government operations through December 9 at last year's enacted levels. Let's keep working together to pass it.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

REMEMBERING SHIMON PERES

Mr. REID. Mr. President, on a codel that I led, we were going to stop in Israel, and I told all of the Senators with me that I wanted to take time while we were there to meet my favorite statesman who I had ever met, and that is Shimon Peres.

As my friend the Republican leader outlined, he has a distinctive résumé. I will always remember Eric Cantor, the Republican leader in the House at the time—I called him and said: Shimon Peres is going to be 90 years old, and it would be wonderful if we could get that Gold Medal done during the time he is 90. Eric delivered. It wasn't easy, but he delivered, and I will always remember that. It meant a great deal to this man who had received so many different awards, but to get the highest distinction we as Members of Congress can give someone is something he deserved. As I have indicated, he is the most inspirational public servant I have ever encountered. And when we met him in Israel, he didn't let me down. He was stunningly visionary, like I had always known him to be. What I have said is not hyperbole in

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



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any way. I repeat, he was the most visionary and inspirational leader I have ever known.

Let me repeat some of the accomplishments my friend the Republican leader just outlined. He was the Prime Minister of Israel twice, Acting Prime Minister twice, President of Israel, Minister of Defense twice, Minister of Finance, Minister of Transportation, and he served in eight other Cabinet posts. That is a pretty good record.

Shimon Peres was a brilliant man who spoke 6 languages and authored 11 books. He was the definition of a statesman. He was a guiding light for peace—always for peace. He made Israel and the Middle East and the world a better place.

Above all, we should all learn something from this good man. Here is what he said, and this is how he lived his life:

Optimists and pessimists die the same way. They just live differently. I prefer to live as an optimist.

That really says it all. He lived his entire life as an optimist. From the challenges he and his family faced because of the Holocaust to his work for a lasting peace to secure Israel, he never wavered in his hope for the world. He was always looking forward. He had some political battles. The leaders of Israel had all been in the military fighting. He never served in the military, but his abilities were so pronounced that he was able to succeed, as I have outlined in his résumé.

The last time I talked to him, I called him and I said: One of my prize staff members, Jessica Lewis, is coming to Israel with her dad, and her father has never been to Israel. I have told them how I feel about you. Is there any way you could meet them?

And he met them. Of course he did. He spent time with them. That is who he was, a person whom I so admired, and he had time for Jessica and her dad.

I join the people of the world in mourning the passing of this good, kind, and inspirational man. I send my deepest condolences to his family and the people of Israel. I am so happy that the delegation of people who are going to attend his funeral will be led by the President of the United States, Barack Obama.

I will miss Shimon Peres. The world will forever miss this good person.

FUNDING FOR FLINT, MICHIGAN

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I am happy to see the progress that has been made in the House of Representatives with respect to Flint, MI. This is a step in the right direction toward advancing funding for the people of Flint in the lameduck. However, I do have some concern. The statement of my Republican colleague, the leader of the Senate, was that he and Senator INHOFE would work toward funding. This should be easy. Why can't they just say they will do it? This is not deficit

spending; this is money that the people of Michigan have allowed—STABENOW and PETERS—to be given up. It is Michigan money that is going to be used in a different way. The money is already there. We overwhelmingly supported it.

So, as I have said before, we will continue to exercise caution moving forward, but I am glad to see that progress has been made. If it were up to me, I believe these three nationally declared emergencies—Louisiana, \$2.8 billion—what happened in Baton Rouge and other parts of Louisiana was devastating. There were rainstorms that even the coast of Louisiana had never seen before—never seen before. Thousands of structures were damaged, and hundreds of them were destroyed. I think they are entitled to work on fixing all of that. We should do as we do with emergencies.

The Presiding Officer is from Texas, and we have stepped forward every time there has been an emergency in Texas and taken care of it, whether it was an explosion that blew up a facility there, whether it was floods. The many problems Texas has had over the last decade, we have taken care of them, as we should.

I think West Virginia, which has an emergency declaration of \$310 million—that should be taken care of.

A much smaller one but a very important one to the people of Maryland—small in proportion to the two I just mentioned—that is nationally declared. We should take care of it.

So I hope we will not continue to mourn the fact that these emergencies occur, these national disasters occur; we have to take care of them. I hope we can do that. It would be the right thing to do.

I look forward to continuing to try to work something out on the CR. We are not there yet, but I hope we can get that done expeditiously.

Mr. President, I ask that the Chair announce the business of the day.

LEGISLATIVE BRANCH APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2017

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 5325, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 5325) making appropriations for the Legislative Branch for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2017, and for other purposes.

Pending:

McConnell (for Cochran) amendment No. 5082, in the nature of a substitute.

McConnell amendment No. 5083 (to amendment No. 5082), to change the enactment date.

McConnell amendment No. 5084 (to amendment No. 5083), of a perfecting nature.

McConnell amendment No. 5085 (to the language proposed to be stricken by amendment No. 5082), to change the enactment date.

McConnell amendment No. 5086 (to amendment No. 5085), of a perfecting nature.

McConnell motion to commit the bill to the Committee on Appropriations, with in-

structions, McConnell amendment No. 5087, to change the enactment date.

McConnell amendment No. 5088 (to (the instructions) amendment No. 5087), of a perfecting nature.

McConnell amendment No. 5089 (to amendment No. 5088), of a perfecting nature.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the Chamber is vacant, so I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COTTON). Without objection, it is so ordered.

JUSTICE AGAINST SPONSORS OF TERRORISM ACT—VETO

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the veto message to accompany S. 2040, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Veto message to accompany S. 2040, the Justice Against Sponsors of Terrorism Act.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be 2 hours of debate equally divided between the leaders or their designees.

The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I am honored to open the debate today on the effort by this body and by the U.S. Congress to give the loved ones of the victims of terrorism on 9/11 their day in court—simple justice.

Fifteen years ago we stood in horror as our country suffered the worst terrorist attack on the United States in the history of our Nation. Nearly 3,000 innocent lives were lost, including heroic first responders, firemen, police, and beloved honorable men and women—148 of them from my home State of Connecticut. Over these years, I have watched and listened to them in their strength and courage as they have tirelessly sought to make this system of justice work in the memory of their loved ones.

The terrorists who struck on 9/11 tried and failed to destroy that system of justice and the ideals of this Nation. Our hearts were broken, but our country and our ideals were not.

Over the past 15 years, I have been honored to work with those families. Today gives us the opportunity to move forward with legislation, despite the President's veto.

I deeply respect the President and the reasons that he has given for vetoing the Justice Against Sponsors of Terrorism Act, but I urge my colleagues to move swiftly and soundly to reverse this veto so these families can have their day in court. That is what the legal system of this country is designed to do. It is the system where I spent my career before the Senate