



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 114th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 162

WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 1, 2016

No. 172

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 God, thank You for the joy of Your surprises. You do more for us than we can ask or imagine.

Keep the hearts of our Senators steadfast toward You. Lord, lead them safely to the refuge of Your choosing, for we know You desire to give them a future and a hope. Today, provide them with the power to do Your will as they more fully realize that they are Your servants. Give them the wisdom to make Your Holy Word the litmus test by which they evaluate each action as they refuse to deviate from the path of integrity. May they maintain a conscious void of offense toward You or humanity.

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. HELLER). The majority leader is recognized.

TRIBUTE TO HAL ROGERS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, this morning I would like to pay tribute to a fellow Kentuckian who has devoted much of his life to public service, my good friend Congressman HAL ROGERS of Kentucky's Fifth District. HAL, of

course, just won reelection in his district with a modest 100 percent of the vote. I imagine he will serve here in Congress for many years to come, but his term as chairman of the House Appropriations Committee is drawing to a close at the end of this 114th Congress. So I thought it fitting to say a few words about the extraordinary tenure of this remarkable man.

HAL has served on the Appropriations Committee for more than 30 years and was selected as the 31st chairman 6 years ago. To mark the end of his chairmanship, family and friends and several special guests assembled a few months back in the House Appropriations Committee hearing room to unveil his official portrait as chairman of the committee.

HAL's portrait hangs alongside those of former chairmen, including some who went on to become Speakers of the House and, in the case of James Garfield, President of the United States. Adding his portrait to this distinguished group is the continuation of a century-old tradition. Many of HAL's colleagues, including Speaker RYAN, were on hand to mark the occasion of a well-deserved tribute to a man I have been honored to serve alongside for many years and to have known for even longer.

I first met HAL ROGERS several decades ago and later worked with him during the 1971 Kentucky gubernatorial campaign. While the Republican candidate that year, Tom Emberton, did not win the race, it was clear to me after getting to know HAL that he was destined for great things. Born in the small town of Barrier, KY, HAL became first a country lawyer in the town of Somerset and then the Commonwealth attorney for the region. He was first elected to the Congress with the Reagan revolution back in 1980 and is now the dean of Kentucky's congressional delegation.

Chairman ROGERS is legendary in Congress and back home for his relent-

less focus on the concerns and priorities of the people of the Fifth District. Long before the issue of opioid abuse dominated national headlines, HAL played an instrumental role in highlighting and preventing the scourge of drug abuse that has impacted many in Eastern Kentucky.

He has helped bring jobs and hope to the people of Southeastern Kentucky, thanks to projects like PRIDE, which promotes environmental responsibility, Operation UNITE, which helps fight substance abuse, and the Southeast Kentucky Economic Development Corporation, which encourages economic development and growth.

Through the years, HAL spearheaded numerous educational initiatives for all ages: Forward in the Fifth, Rogers Scholars, Rogers Explorers, and the Rogers Entrepreneurial Leadership Institute, just to name a few.

HAL helped launch TOUR Southern and Eastern Kentucky in order to boost tourism in the region and the Center for Rural Development as a way to help transform the area's economy. He has helped secure millions for the Kentucky National Guard, in which he proudly served, and the U.S. Forest Service for marijuana eradication efforts, and he recently spearheaded the Shaping Our Appalachian Region, or SOAR, initiative as a way to unite Kentucky's Appalachian counties around a common vision for attracting jobs and economic development to the region. He has also supported the Appalachian Regional Commission, pushed back against the Obama administration's War on Coal, and has earned a reputation as a tireless advocate for a strong national defense. I am proud to have worked closely with HAL on these and many other projects on behalf of the Bluegrass State.

His constituents can also be proud of the work that he has done for his Nation in his role as Appropriations

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



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chair. Under his leadership, the Appropriations Committee responsibly refocused efforts on regular order, reviewing and approving all—I repeat all—12 annual government spending bills through the committee during his tenure. As chairman, HAL has made oversight of Federal spending a top priority, and his Appropriations Committee has held more than 600 hearings to ensure that Federal tax dollars were being spent properly. Under his leadership, the Appropriations Committee has gotten results, such as reducing wasteful spending by \$126 billion in total annual spending cuts since fiscal year 2010.

HAL is only the third Kentuckian to chair the House Appropriations Committee. The last was Congressman William Natcher, who held that position until 1994. He is, of course, the only Republican chairman from the Commonwealth. I know that becoming Appropriations Committee chairman was a great achievement for HAL and something he worked hard to earn.

Just on a personal note, I would like to add that HAL ROGERS is a great friend of mine. Elaine and I have always enjoyed spending time with him and his wife Cynthia. As the senior Republican in Kentucky politics, he has been a leader in getting things done for the benefit of the people of his district and of the Commonwealth for nearly four decades.

You can see his impact in many places. One can drive across the Hal Rogers Parkway in Southeastern Kentucky or visit one of the many institutions in service to Kentuckians. HAL is literally beloved in Southeastern Kentucky where he regularly wins reelection, as I indicated earlier, with an overwhelming majority of the votes.

HAL loves the people he serves. He is one of them. He is proud to champion their causes here in the Nation's Capital.

I thank Chairman ROGERS for his steady hand at the helm of the House Appropriations Committee for the last 6 years and for all he has done for Kentucky. Both Kentucky and the Nation are thankful for his service. As he turns his considerable energies to other important roles in Congress, I wish him the very best and look forward to partnering with him many more times in the future on behalf of the Commonwealth we both love.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, will my friend yield for a brief comment?

Mr. MCCONNELL. Yes.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I am going to give a speech here in a minute regarding Senator MIKULSKI. But the reason I mention that is I want the record to reflect that Chairman ROGERS has been so nice to me whenever we have gone to public events and events dealing with the work of the Hill. He has been always a gentleman—I mean first class.

In meetings with just Democrats, I have heard Senator MIKULSKI talk about her great relationship with this

good man, so it has been pleasant for me to listen to the description of the relationship of the Republican leader and the chairman of the Appropriations Committee. I just wanted to take a minute and let everyone know that I have also been honored by his presence wherever it has been.

TRIBUTE TO DAVID VITTER

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, after two terms in the Senate and more than two decades of public service, our friend and colleague Senator DAVID VITTER will be leaving us at the end of his term. I would like to say a few words before he does.

Our friend from Louisiana is the first Republican Senator popularly elected from his home State. It is an impressive achievement that history will long record. But Senator VITTER had little opportunity to celebrate at the time. Hurricane Katrina hit just a few months after he took office. It was a catastrophic natural disaster that presented massive and immediate challenges for Louisiana.

Our colleague did not miss a beat. Back home, he and his team worked tirelessly to set up mobile offices. Here in the Senate he fought hard to bring aid to those in need. It underlined something we have all come to know about Senator VITTER: He is passionate about his home State. That has been a constant throughout his career. He simply loves Louisiana. He loves the richness of its history, loves the richness of its culture, loves the richness of its food, too—crawfish pie etouffee and several other things I can't pronounce. Senator VITTER loves it all.

He flies home just about every chance he gets. When he was younger, he turned down offers from Harvard and Yale to study law in the Pelican State. This is after he spent some time in Cambridge, MA, and Oxford, as a Rhodes Scholar, by the way—pretty impressive—so perhaps it was born of a simple lesson: You're just not going to find alligator sauce piquante anywhere else.

Nor are you likely to find many Saints fans, certainly none as enthusiastic as our colleague. You will find Senator VITTER glued to a TV every football Sunday. If the Senate is in session, he will watch between votes in the cloakroom behind me. He has been a diehard fan of the Black and Gold for as long as he can remember. It was not as though he had much choice, of course, growing up in the Big Easy, but he has stuck by his team through thick and thin—often thin. It is what made the Saints eventual Super Bowl win in 2010 that much sweeter. He called it a dream come true.

This tenacity and determination carries over to his political career as well. Whatever the issue, Senator VITTER's staff says he is always looking for solutions that can improve the lives of Louisianans. They say he is always ready to roll up his sleeves and stay

the course on legislation that will do just that.

Senator VITTER has worked hard to protect his constituents from the effects of hurricanes and floods before they occur and to rebuild when they do. He has taken the lead on important initiatives to reform the Army Corps of Engineers and improve our Nation's waterways.

Most recently, he helped to pass the first significant reform of the Toxic Substances Control Act in nearly four decades. Senator VITTER was a critical player throughout, working across the aisle with our late colleague Senator Lautenberg and then Senator Udall to steer this much needed legislation to passage and eventually law.

Senator VITTER says he believes his most important job is to keep an open-door policy for constituents who need help. I know he would tell you that, although it may not be the most publicized part of the job, he considers it the most fulfilling.

He still remembers the woman in desperate need of a liver transplant. With the help of his office, she got it. He still remembers the veteran who needed an operation to save his leg and his life. With the help of Team Vitter, he received that too.

Senator VITTER will never forget the countless families in need of assistance following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the oil spill, and recent flooding. He has seen firsthand the life-changing, even lifesaving impacts constituent casework can have. It is what inspired him to compile these powerful stories and best practices into a constituent service guidebook that will help guide his successor from day one.

Of course, none of this would have been possible without a great staff, and Senator VITTER has built a strong team that is as committed to the people of Louisiana as he is. It is tight-knit. It is loyal. It is a group of men and women who know they have a boss who takes genuine interest in their success, who trusts their judgment, and who is always eager for their input.

Senator VITTER awards a Reform Trophy each week to the staffer with the best new policy idea. He truly believes in a heavy dose of competition. That includes when his son Jack is in town. Staffers can expect to be enlisted in an entirely different competition then; it is called Office Olympics. Team Vitter knows to bring their A game when Jack is around. They also know to bring their sense of humor. It turns out Jack is a bit of a prankster. I hear you don't want Jack laying hands on a Post-it note or a roll of aluminum foil when he is in the office, but lifelong memories are often made when he does just that.

It is these relationships and it is this capacity to make a difference for the people of Louisiana through constituent service and the legislative process that I am sure our colleague will miss most when he leaves the Senate.