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## Senate

The Senate met at 12 noon 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 Spirit, our Counselor and Guide, give us the faith to believe in the ultimate triumph of truth and righteousness. Today, teach our lawmakers to do things Your way, embracing Your precepts and walking in Your path. Remind them that the narrow and difficult road eventually leads to abundant living. As You teach them to live abundantly, replace their fears with faith, their confusion with clarity, and their discouragement with optimism. Lord, remind them that no weapon formed against them will be able to prosper. Give them a strong faith in the efficacy of prayer, as they continue to commune with You throughout this day. May Your heavenly peace, which transcends human understanding, guard their hearts and minds today and always.

We pray in Your sacred 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 (Mrs. ERNST). The majority leader is recognized.

### OBAMACARE

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, when ObamaCare's supporters forced

their partisan law on our country, they promised an easy-to-use system—one that would lower premiums and out-of-pocket health care costs, one that would foster choice and allow families to keep the plans and doctors they liked.

But it didn't take long for the American people to discover the truth about ObamaCare. Too many have been personally hurt by this law. Too many feel they are worse off than they were before ObamaCare. Listening to their stories helps to explain why they might feel this way.

For instance, too many Americans say their ObamaCare plans are too expensive to actually use. Too many say their ObamaCare premiums have gone up and up, although their options have diminished. Too many say their choices on ObamaCare have deteriorated to just one or two insurers.

These are some of the realities of ObamaCare for too many families in Kentucky and across the country. These are some inconvenient realities that those who continue to defend this failed law must finally face up to. Remember, even former President Clinton called ObamaCare "the craziest thing in the world." This was Bill Clinton on ObamaCare.

So it is little wonder that 8 in 10 favor changing ObamaCare significantly or replacing it altogether. We must act quickly to bring relief to the American people. I hope Democrats will work with us as we take the next steps toward repealing and replacing this failing law.

Tonight, Senators from both parties will have an important opportunity to take a vote on the legislative tools necessary to repeal ObamaCare. Then we can send it to the House and begin taking the next steps to finally move away from ObamaCare, while we move ahead with smarter health care policies. This is what the American people have called for us to do. It is the best way forward for our country and the people we represent.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

### RUSSIA

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I rise today to speak on a matter of great importance to the foreign policy of this country: our relationship with Russia and the efficacy of international sanctions to achieve our international security goals.

The reports of the past 24 hours are extremely troubling. But one thing we now all agree on is that Russia is behind the hacking of our election, as even the President-elect has now just said. This makes it even more important that we not only keep the existing sanctions in place but that we institute a new, tough sanctions regime in response so Russia can't get away with what they did and other countries will know as well that they will suffer penalty if they try to interfere with our elections.

Unfortunately, this morning's Cabinet hearing on Mr. Tillerson's nomination is a very troubling sign of things to come. In one breath, Mr. Tillerson said that the invasion of Crimea is a violation of international law, and in the next, amazingly enough, he declined to commit to maintaining the existing sanctions regime against Russia. He said he wants to get classified briefings first and then consult with the President-elect. But I remind the

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



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country, as my friend the Senator from Florida, Mr. RUBIO, from across the aisle, did, that these sanctions are a result of past crimes.

We don't need a classified briefing to know what Russia has done in the past. To duck the question and to refuse to commit to continuing these sanctions is tantamount to sweeping Russia's flouting of international laws under the rug. It sort of says: Go ahead, interfere in our elections again; nothing will happen to you. It says the same to China and Iran or to any other country that might try to hack.

Secretary Nominee Tillerson has also not committed to new sanctions. Just yesterday, a bipartisan group of Senators, including the Senators from South Carolina, Maryland, Florida, California, Nebraska, introduced a tough, new sanctions-on-Russia bill for their interference in our elections. I support this effort. I believe the Senate should act soon upon it. I am very concerned that thus far the President-elect, Mr. Tillerson, and Senator SESSIONS have not endorsed these tough new sanctions.

The Senator from Florida—not from my party—also pressed Mr. Tillerson on a series of war crimes committed by the Assad regime and the Russian military in Syria. These crimes have been reported in the press and detailed extensively by people on the ground and discussed at length by my friend, the Republican Senator from Arizona, Mr. McCAIN. Mr. Tillerson will not even acknowledge these violations of human rights and war crimes.

Finally, I am very concerned that despite the fact that we have registered lobbying disclosures from ExxonMobil itself, documenting their involvement in lobbying against Iran sanctions, Mr. Tillerson said this morning that Exxon did not lobby on sanctions, to his knowledge.

This comes on top of recent reports that Exxon avoided Iran's sanctions by dealing with Iran and other state sponsors of terrorism through a European subsidiary. This, too, is very concerning. It raises real questions as to whether the President-elect and his Cabinet are prepared to stand up to Putin, stand up to Iran, and represent the interests of the American people and defend our democratic allies around the world.

My friends on the other side of the aisle have nearly universally criticized this President, Mr. Obama, for his policy on Syria and for not being tough enough on Vladimir Putin. Republicans have always called themselves the party of Reagan. I don't need to remind any of them of his famous speech in West Berlin. Now, it seems, this fundamental tenet of Republican foreign policy, and indeed our national policy for the last few decades, is eroding before our very eyes. Now, it seems, the President-elect and his Cabinet may never address the international security policy challenges posed by Russia and state sponsors of terrorism like Iran

and Syria. If Mr. Tillerson cannot even say that he will support the existing sanctions, what kind of Secretary of State will he be? I am worried.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

#### CONCURRENT RESOLUTION ON THE BUDGET, FISCAL YEAR 2017

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. Con. Res. 3, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A concurrent resolution (S. Con. Res. 3) setting forth the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2017 and setting forth the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2018 through 2026.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, 3 hours of debate remain on the resolution for the majority and 3 hours of debate remain on the resolution for the minority.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### TRIBUTE TO CHRISTOPHER GAHAN

Mr. TOOMEY. Madam President, I rise this afternoon to bid a very fond farewell to a man whom I have come to like very much and respect enormously. He is Christopher Gahan. He has been my chief of staff for 6 years. After 6 years of extraordinary service, he has decided that he is going to move on to the private sector. I want to say a few words about Christopher's background and his contribution to my office, to our country, and the people of Pennsylvania.

Christopher is actually from New Hampshire. He is a native of Rye Beach. After growing up in New Hampshire, he earned his degree in biology at Brown University and then went on to get a law degree from Harvard. I can assure everyone he has recovered from his educational experience to a very extensive degree.

He went into law and practiced at the law firm of Latham & Watkins in Los

Angeles and Washington. He had a very successful time there, but he decided he wanted to come to Washington and work in government and, specifically, work on the Hill. He went to work for Judd Gregg, Senator Gregg from New Hampshire, and Christopher Gahan, I understand, had almost every job that a Senate office has. He started at the very beginning, but because of his enormous talents and his ability and hard work, he relatively quickly rose and became chief of staff for Senator Gregg.

When I was elected to the Senate in 2010, I got a call within a matter of weeks from Christopher, and he said he wanted to come and meet with me and discuss the fact that I needed a chief of staff. He drove up to Allentown. We had lunch, and I decided almost immediately that this guy would probably do a great job. He clearly had the attributes that I was looking for.

I should also point out some of the things that are perhaps not as widely known about Christopher outside of my office. One is that he is a tremendous athlete. He has been for a long time. When he was in college, he was on the varsity men's water polo team. He was cocaptain at Brown, he was All-Ivy League, and to this day, he gets up at 4 or 5 o'clock every morning and usually goes for a run. He occasionally bangs out a marathon and thinks nothing of it. He has quite a diverse range of talents.

He also has a very peculiar taste in certain things. He loves all things related to cats, except the animals themselves. I don't understand that. Maybe it is an allergy; I am not sure exactly what it is. If you look at his desk area, he has funny photos of cats, little porcelain cats, little masks of cats, and a calendar of cats. He loves all things cats, except the animals themselves. It is quite remarkable.

Having said all of that about his background, what I really want to say is how fortunate Pennsylvania and I have been to have Christopher Gahan serving in this capacity. As I said, from the day that I had lunch with Christopher, I knew he could do a great job. I knew he had that ability. I had very high expectations for what he could do, and he has exceeded those expectations every day. It has really been quite amazing. He is a very intelligent man, but more importantly, he has great judgment and a great ability to work with people.

The role he has played in my office has been absolutely tremendous. For example, he is very knowledgeable about a number of issue areas, but he always understood that his role was to help the legislative assistants who had responsibilities for those areas. Christopher's role was to make sure that they were able to do the work they were assigned to do and to really shine and get a chance to excel and to grow personally. While he could have inserted himself in that dynamic, he never did. He always chose to empower