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Senate

The Senate met at 3 p.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

PRAYER

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

Eternal Lord God, our sure foundation, we need You during this challenging season.

As our lawmakers face a Friday deadline to fund the Federal Government beyond April 28, inspire them to be part of the solutions and not the problems. Remind them that Your first command to humanity in Genesis 1 was to be productive, to solve problems, to subdue the Earth, and to have sovereignty.

Lord, give our Senators the wisdom to subdue division, rancor, and partisanship. May their primary desire be to unite in the common cause of doing what is best for our Nation and world. Show them how to protect the Constitution against all enemies, foreign and domestic.

May those who believe in You remember that You are the only constituent whom they must always seek to please.

We pray in Your merciful 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. YOUNG). The majority leader is recognized.

ISSUES BEFORE THE SENATE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, over the past couple of weeks, Senators have had the opportunity to travel to their States, meet with those they represent, and talk about issues that matter most to their communities. I think I speak on behalf of each of my colleagues when I say that this is one of the most important aspects of our jobs. Hearing from those we represent and engaging in discussions about the issues they face allow us to better serve as their voices here in the Senate.

It was a productive State work period, and I know we are all eager to get back to work here in Washington on many important issues. So I would like to welcome back my colleagues as we head into what is sure to be a busy work period.

As we all know, bipartisan talks continued through the State work period on the way forward on government funding legislation. Those discussions continue this week so we can complete our work on that issue very soon.

And, today, we will have the opportunity to advance two well-qualified administration nominees. In just a couple of hours, we will vote to confirm former Georgia Governor Sonny Perdue to be our next Secretary of Agriculture.

Governor Perdue—who grew up on a farm, worked as a veterinarian, and eventually led a State with a \$74 billion agricultural sector—has been around agriculture his entire life. He is well qualified to oversee and implement this Nation's agriculture, forestry, and food policies. Because of his more than 20 years of public service, Governor Perdue has garnered significant bipartisan backing and was reported out of committee with a near unanimous vote. This is good news for our country, and it is certainly good news for my home State of Kentucky.

Kentucky has a strong heritage of agriculture, which plays an invaluable

role in our economy. From traditional cash crops like corn and soybeans to groundbreaking innovations like industrial hemp, Kentuckians continue to be on the forefront of agriculture with cutting-edge research and quality products. In addition, Kentucky is recognized as the world capital of both bourbon and horses. These industries contribute to the State's economy and to our tourism. As the world turns to the Commonwealth for the 143rd Kentucky Derby, our agricultural sector will be on full display.

I look forward to voting to confirm Governor Perdue later today, just as I look forward to working with him to continue developing smart agricultural policies that support both Kentucky and our country.

Then we will take a vote to advance the nomination of Rod Rosenstein to be Deputy Attorney General. Rod Rosenstein was confirmed to his current position as the U.S. attorney for the District of Maryland by a voice vote. He was nominated to that position by President Bush and retained it under President Obama—throughout President Obama's entire term of office.

He comes to the Senate with a recommendation of Democrats, like our former colleague Senator Mikulski and Maryland's Democratic attorney general, who said that “[Rod] Rosenstein would be an ‘outstanding’ deputy attorney general.”

Rosenstein has earned so much bipartisan support to serve as the Deputy Attorney General that the Judiciary Committee reported out his nomination with all but one member voting in the affirmative. So, clearly, there is no need to force additional procedural hurdles on this nominee. Yet, our colleagues across the aisle have decided to force an unnecessary cloture vote on his nomination anyway. It is the latest in a long pattern this year of needless Democratic obstruction that is not intended to change a result—just delay

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



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for delay's sake. I would urge our Democratic friends to reconsider what they are doing.

Mr. Rosenstein is a highly qualified nominee. He is well respected across the political spectrum and within the legal and law enforcement communities. He should be confirmed without further delay.

REMEMBERING KATE O'BEIRNE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, on another matter, over the weekend, we lost one of conservatism's most insightful journalists with the passing of Kate O'Beirne.

Kate was long a leading voice for conservative principles, and she served as mentor to so many all along the way. In a town full of class presidents and big shots, Kate never hesitated to help someone who was new to Washington or down on his luck.

She was fiercely devoted to her country, to her faith, and to her family, including her husband, Jim, her two sons Phil and John, her sisters, and her grandchildren. Beyond her immediate family, Kate helped to foster a family at National Review with her wit, warmth, and compassion.

As her family, friends, and many others across the Nation mourn her loss today, we wish them comfort in this trying time.

As anyone who knew Kate can attest, her impact will not soon be forgotten.

REMEMBERING MATTHEW MCCLANAHAN

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, on one final matter, I would like to offer the Senate's condolences to a family in the Capitol community who suffered a great loss during the recent State work period.

Last week, Matthew McClanahan, a well-respected member of the Capitol community, passed away after a tragic accident near the Capitol Grounds. Matt worked as a pipefitter for the Architect of the Capitol and earned a reputation as a hard worker who took pride in his work here at the Capitol. As those who were closest to him recall, Matt was "funny, sweet, and kind" and "always the first to show up when someone needed a helping hand."

His sudden passing is felt by so many—colleagues, friends, family, and most especially by his wife, Lauren, and two young children, Evie and Matthew.

We know that no words can convey the heartbreaking loss they feel, but on behalf of the Senate and the Capitol community as a whole, I want to send our deepest condolences to them at this immensely difficult time.

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. SCHUMER. Mr. 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.

REMEMBERING MATTHEW MCCLANAHAN

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, first, I echo the majority leader's remarks on the tragic death of Matthew McClanahan last Tuesday. We all know the Architect of the Capitol employs plumbers, landscapers, painters, electricians, custodians, and mechanics. They make their careers by ensuring that our buildings and grounds are well maintained, safe, and beautiful. The stunning tragedy of last week has shaken this entire staff to its core.

Matthew McClanahan died way too young. That he died at work in repairing the Capitol's sprinkler system has hit our entire community very hard.

To those who worked so hard to save him, you have our gratitude and admiration.

To those who feel his absence so keenly in their daily lives, you have our sympathy and our support.

May you remember the words of Scripture fittingly from Matthew: "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."

Our prayers go out to his family—his wife, Lauren; his 7-year-old daughter, Evie; his young son, Matthew; and to his parents, brothers, and sisters-in-law, and grandparents.

His funeral was yesterday, and I understand it was completely packed, with some mourners outside and unable to get in. He was well loved. He will be well remembered.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING BILL

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I join the majority leader in welcoming everybody back to the Senate after the 2-week recess. We have a lot of business to attend to this week. Most importantly, we have to pass a spending bill to keep the government open.

So far, the discussions between our two sides have been constructive and are progressing nicely. Without interference, I believe our two parties can come together on an agreement by the end of the week. The four-corner negotiations—that is Leader McCONNELL, Speaker RYAN, Leader PELOSI, and I—have been going very well, and a monkey wrench was thrown into them.

I will caution: If the administration insists on poison pill riders or extraneous funding requests, then our talks could get sidetracked, particularly if the administration demands funding for a border wall.

Democrats have been long clear that the border wall is a nonstarter. More than a month ago, here on the floor,

from this desk, I warned against including funding for the border wall in any must-pass government spending bill. If the administration insists on funding for a wall in this bill, it will endanger the prospects of a bill's passing and raise the prospects of a government shutdown because a border wall, we believe, is a pointless waste of taxpayer money for several reasons.

First, President Trump promised that Mexico would pay for the wall, not American taxpayers. The idea that President Trump is fulfilling a campaign promise when he says that America will pay for the wall now and Mexico will pay it back later is untrue. He will only fulfill his campaign promise if he gets Mexico to pay for the wall now. That is No. 1.

Second, the Trump administration has not shown us any specific plans about how and where the wall will be built. How high will it be? How much will it cost? Where along the Rio Grande River will it be built? The President's own Secretary of the Interior, Mr. Zinke, said:

The border is complicated, as far as building a physical wall . . . the Rio Grande, what side of the river are you going to put the wall? We're not going to put it on our side and cede the river to Mexico. And we're probably not going to put it in the middle of the river.

Zinke said it well: How, where, when, and how many dollars is this wall going to cost? Before rushing into it, we ought to see some real plans, not just talk.

Third, the cost of the wall is staggering. Some estimates peg it as high as \$50 billion. That money could be spent a lot better elsewhere on things like infrastructure and education. For example, with \$50 billion, we could connect more than 98 percent of Americans to high-speed internet, more than double the Federal funding for roads and bridges across our country, and update every VA building listed in the VA's long-range strategic capital plan. The money would be better spent elsewhere.

Fourth, there are much better ways to protect our borders—with drones, fences, and other more cost-effective measures. The President said the wall is needed to stop the flow of drugs, but drugs come into our country in several ways, including by water, through tunnels, and snuck in by cars and trucks. We have all seen the pictures on TV where they hide them in the carburetor of the car, and no one finds them.

A huge, expensive wall will still have to have border crossings for vehicles. A huge, expensive wall could still have tunnels dug beneath it. In reality, a combination of drones and fencing and other more sophisticated means would be a much more effective way to secure the border.

Fifth, in order to build the wall, the President—the Federal Government—would need to take private land, using eminent domain from thousands of law-abiding Americans. Much of the