

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the Acosta nomination, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read the nomination of R. Alexander Acosta, of Florida, to be Secretary of Labor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 11:30 a.m. will be equally divided in the usual form.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING BILL

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, as Senators continue to negotiate the appropriations bills this week, I want to reiterate my hopes that we can reach an agreement by this Friday. So long as we try to operate within the parameters our parties have operated under for the last few spending bills, I am optimistic about the chances for a deal.

I am glad the President has taken the wall off the table in the negotiations. Democrats have always been for border security. In fact, we supported one of the toughest border security packages in comprehensive immigration reform in an amendment offered by two of my Republican colleagues, Senator HOEVEN and Senator CORKER. We may address border security in this bill as well, but it will not include any funding for a wall, plain and simple.

Now, we still have a few issues to work out, including the issue of cost sharing, Puerto Rico, and getting permanent healthcare for miners, which I was glad to hear the majority leader voice support for yesterday—permanent healthcare for miners. I want to salute Senator MANCHIN, who has worked so long and hard for these poor miners who have struggled and have had hard, hard, hard lives. They shouldn't have their health benefits taken away. But above all, in the bill we have to make sure there are no poison pill riders. That has been a watchword of our negotiations in the past and is what led to success, and I hope both sides of the aisle will pursue that now.

We Democrats remain committed to fighting President Trump's cutback on women's health, a rollback of financial protections in Wall Street reform, rollbacks of protections for clean air and clean water, and against a deportation force. Those are the kinds of poison pill riders that could hurt an agreement, and I hope we will just decide at the given time that we can debate them in regular order, but they shouldn't hold the government hostage and pass them without debate.

THE PRESIDENT'S TAX PLAN

Mr. President, today we will also be hearing some details—we don't know how many—about the President's tax

plan. We will take a look at what they are proposing, but I can tell you this: If the President's plan is to give a massive tax break to the very wealthy in this country—a plan that will mostly benefit people and businesses like President Trump's—that will not pass muster with Democrats.

The very wealthy are doing pretty well in America. Their incomes keep going up. Their wealth keeps going up. God bless them. Let them do well. But they don't need another huge tax break while middle-class Americans and those struggling to get there need help just staying afloat. It is already the case that CEOs and other folks at the top of the corporate ladder can use deductions and loopholes to pay less in taxes than their secretaries. We don't need a plan that establishes the same principle in the basic rates by allowing wealthy businessmen, like President Trump, to use passthrough entities to pay 15 percent in taxes while everyone else pays in the twenties and thirties. We don't need a tax plan that allows the very rich to use passthroughs to reduce their rates to 15 percent while average Americans are paying much more. That is not tax reform. That is just a tax giveaway to the very, very wealthy that will explode the deficit.

So we will take a look at what the President proposes later today. If it is just another deficit-busting tax break for the very wealthy, I predict their proposal will land with a dud with the American people.

NORTH KOREA

Mr. President, later today, the Senate will be receiving a briefing by the administration on the situation in North Korea. I look forward to the opportunity to hear from the Secretary of State, who I understand drafted the administration's plan, and other senior administration officials about their views on North Korea and the posture of the United States in that region.

I think what many of my colleagues hope to hear articulated is a coherent, well-thought-out, strategic plan. So far, Congress and the American public have heard very little in the way of strategy with respect to North Korea. We have heard very little about strategy to combat ISIS. We have heard very little about a strategy on how to deal with Putin's Russia. We have heard very little about our strategy in Syria. Only a few weeks ago, the President authorized a strike in Syria. Is there a broader strategy? Does the administration support regime change or not? Do they plan further U.S. involvement?

These are difficult and important questions, and there are many more of them to be asked and answered about this administration's nascent national security policy for hotspots around the globe. I hope that later today, at least in relation to North Korea, we Senators are given a serious, well-considered outline of the administration's strategic goals in the Korean peninsula and their plans to achieve them.

THE PRESIDENT'S FIRST ONE HUNDRED DAYS

Mr. President, as we approach the 100-day mark of the Trump administration, we Democrats have been highlighting the litany of broken and unfulfilled promises that President Trump made to working families. It is our job as the minority party to hold the President accountable to the promises he made to voters, particularly the ones he made to working families who are struggling out there. Many of these folks voted for the President because they believed him when he promised to bring back their jobs or get tougher on trade or drain the swamp. So it is important to point out where the President has gone back on his word and where he has fallen short in these first 100 days.

On the crucial issues of jobs and the economy, this President has made little progress in 100 days. His party hasn't introduced a major job-creating piece of legislation to date, and he has actually backtracked on his promises to get tough on trade and outsourcing, two things which have cost our country millions of jobs. I was particularly upset to see the President consider repealing President Obama's law that prevented corporate inversions that allowed big corporations to locate overseas to lower their tax rates.

Instead of draining the swamp and making the government more accountable to the people, President Trump has filled his government with billionaires and bankers and folks laden with conflicts of interest. Amazingly enough, he was going to clean up Washington and make it transparent. The White House has decided to keep the visitor log secret and, even worse, allowed waivers to lobbyists to come to work at the White House on the very same issues they were just lobbying on, and those waivers are kept secret. We will not even know about them.

These reversals aren't the normal adjustments that a President makes when transitioning from a campaign to the reality of government; these are stunning about-faces on core promises the President made to working Americans.

TRUMPCARE

Mr. President, I would like to focus now on one issue: the President's promises on healthcare. On the campaign trail, the President vowed to the American people that he would repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act with better healthcare that lowered costs, provided more generous coverage, and guaranteed insurance for everyone, with no changes to Medicare whatsoever. That is what he said. We are not saying this; he said that. Those are his words: I am going to cover everybody. He said, "We're going to have insurance for everybody . . . much less expensive and much better."

"We're going to have insurance for everybody." But once in office, President Trump broke each and every one of these promises with the rollout of his healthcare bill, TrumpCare. Did

TrumpCare lower costs, as he promised? No. The CBO said premiums would go up by as much as 20 percent in the first few years under TrumpCare.

His bill allowed insurance companies to charge older Americans a whopping five times the amount they could charge to younger folks, and it was estimated that senior citizens could have to pay as much as \$14,000 or \$15,000 more for healthcare, depending on their income and where they lived.

Did his bill provide for better coverage? No. In fact, the most recent version of the TrumpCare bill would allow States to decide whether to protect folks who have preexisting conditions. This was one of the most popular things in ObamaCare, even if people didn't like some other parts of it. If you are a parent and your child has cancer, the insurance companies said: We are cutting you off, and you have to watch your child suffer because you can't afford healthcare. ACA, the Affordable Care Act, ended that. They couldn't cut you off or not give you insurance because your child or you had a serious illness that would cost the insurance company a lot of money. But now, in the proposal they are making, it is up to the States. Tough luck if you live in a State without it.

Did his bill guarantee "insurance for everyone"? That is what he said. No, far from it. The Congressional Budget Office said that TrumpCare would result in 24 million fewer Americans with health coverage after 10 years.

Despite an explicit pledge from Candidate Trump on the eve of the election that he would protect Medicare—because hard-working Americans "made a deal a long time ago"—TrumpCare slashed more than \$100 billion from the Medicare trust fund.

TrumpCare was the exact opposite of everything the President promised his healthcare bill would be. Americans should breathe a sigh of relief—a huge sigh of relief—that the bill didn't pass.

There is a lack of fundamental honesty here. If you believe that there shouldn't be government involvement in healthcare and the private sector should do it all, that is a fine belief. I don't agree with it. But that means higher costs and less coverage for most Americans, and the President and, frankly, many of our Republican colleagues are trying to have it both ways. They want to say to their right-wing friends: I am making government's involvement much less. But then they say to the American people: You are going to get better coverage, more coverage, at lower rates. The two are totally inconsistent. That is why they are having such trouble with TrumpCare over in the House, and there will be even worse trouble here in the Senate, if it ever gets here, which I hope it doesn't.

Healthcare is another example of why this President has so little to show for his first 100 days. Instead of reaching out to Democrats to find areas

where we could compromise on improving our healthcare system—we Democrats have always said: Don't repeal ObamaCare; improve it. We know it needs to have some changes. But, instead, they started out on their own in a partisan way, the very same party that criticized President Obama for working just with Democrats on the issue, despite a yearlong effort to try. So it failed, and it is emblematic of the President's first 100 days. The President's "my way or the highway" approach is one of the main reasons he has so little to show on healthcare and so little to show for his first 100 days in office.

Mr. 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. FLAKE. 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.

(The remarks of Mr. FLAKE pertaining to the introduction of S. 946 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. FLAKE. I yield back the remainder of my time.

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

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

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the time during the quorum call be equally divided.

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

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

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

REMEMBERING JAY DICKEY

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, I come to the floor to honor the memory of former Congressman Jay Dickey, who passed on April 20. When Jay Dickey roamed the Halls of Congress, you knew there might be mischief afoot—and what merry mischief it was.

Jay was opinionated, colorful, and zany. Now that he has passed, the warm laughter of memories once again echoes in these cold, marble halls as we reflect on his life.

He died last Thursday after a battle with Parkinson's, a battle he fought

like every other—with determination and gusto. I, for one, will miss his counsel and friendship, as will the people of Arkansas whom he loved so deeply.

Jay was an Arkansas original. He was born and bred and in the end breathed his last in his hometown of Pine Bluff. He shared a lot in common with the mighty pines of South Arkansas. He stood tall and proud of his community's heritage. He was a pillar of the community. A lawyer and a businessman, he left his mark as an entrepreneur, starting franchises throughout the State, as an advocate representing the city and later taking on such famous clients as coach Eddie Sutton.

Unlike the proverbial tree in the forest, now that Jay Dickey has fallen, the whole State has taken notice.

But, of course, a man's accomplishments are only a window into his character. You had to know Jay personally to get a sense of all the fun there was inside him. It was as if his feet had sunk deep into the soil and soaked up all of the Natural State's richness: its humor, its earnestness, and its strip-the-bark-off candor.

I got to know Jay in my first political campaign. We had never met, and I was a political newcomer, but Jay spent many hours getting to know me and ultimately supported my candidacy, which helped to put me on the map.

Of course, Jay shared a lot of candid advice too. After attending one of my early townhalls, Jay and I went to lunch down the road at Cracker Barrel. I asked him how I did. Jay replied:

Ya did good. Ya did good. But you gotta cut it down some. Ya see that baked potato there? That's a fully loaded baked potato—it's got cheese, sour cream, bacon, onions. Your answers are like that fully loaded baked potato! Make em like a plain potato.

That is just one of the countless stories that added to his legend.

This was the man who offered a ninth grader a college-level internship because he thought the kid had potential; the man who answered any phone in his office that rang twice, just to keep his staff on their toes; the man whose dog once drove his truck into a radio station in Hampton because he left the truck running during an interview to keep the dog cool, and somehow that dog put it in gear; the man who kept a picture of Jesus on his wall, and who, when meeting a new client, would point to the picture and say: "Have you met my friend?"

Yes, the first great joy of his life was his faith, but the second great joy was politics. Jay was the first Republican elected to Congress from South Arkansas since Reconstruction. He won in 1992, the very same year Arkansas elected our Democratic Governor as President.

Despite being who the Democrats must have viewed as the most Republican incumbent in the country, he held onto that seat for almost a decade. Arkansans knew good stock when