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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable TOM COTTON, a Senator from the State of Arkansas.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Almighty God, our refuge and strength, a very present help in turbulent times, thank You that though evil seems to prosper, You continue to guard and guide us with Your loving providence.

Lord, the challenges that our lawmakers face require more than human wisdom. Please shower our Senators with Your wisdom, directing them through life's complexities to Your desired destination. Remind them daily that human life is as fleeting as fading flowers and withering grass. May they find peace in the knowledge that You love and accept them unconditionally. Keep them always in Your care, doing for them more than they can ask or imagine.

We pray in Your Holy Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer 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.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, September 6, 2017.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable TOM COTTON, a Senator from the State of Arkansas, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ORRIN G. HATCH,
President pro tempore.

Mr. COTTON thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

HURRICANE HARVEY DISASTER RELIEF, PREVENTING A DEFAULT, AND FUNDING THE GOVERNMENT

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, as I said yesterday, Congress has a number of pressing issues to address in the coming days. There are three critically important things before us that need to be done very quickly: pass disaster relief legislation to allow us to rebuild from Harvey and prepare for future disasters headed our way, such as Irma; prevent a default so those emergency resources can actually get to Americans who need them; and, of course, keep the government funded. These are the President's immediate priorities, these are my immediate priorities, and they are critically important to establishing credibility and stability as our country continues to recover from one record-setting storm and prepare for yet another. Harvey has already unleashed more rain than any other single storm recorded in the continental United States. Irma has already forced the entire State of Florida into a state of emergency.

I would like to repeat two quotes I shared that are even more relevant

now given the further approach of Irma. This is the President's budget director:

Given the need for additional spending as a result of disaster response and initial recovery from Hurricane Harvey, the administration continues to urge the Congress to act expeditiously to ensure that the debt ceiling does not affect these critical response and recovery efforts.

That is the budget director.

That is because, as the Treasury Secretary explained, "If Congress appropriates the money, but I don't have the ability to borrow more money and pay for it, we're not going to be able to get that money" to the States, and they need it. The need for certainty now is incredibly important.

I have been having conversations with the Democratic leader on my view of the way forward on these issues, and this morning he and I, along with House leaders from both parties, will head to the White House for a meeting to discuss the issues further. It is good to see that Congress has already made steady progress.

I again thank the President and his team for working closely with us to ensure that families and States are able to get the help they need and for working with us to prevent a default or lapse in government service that could get in the way of that help actually being delivered.

As we work on these immediate priorities, Members will also continue working on other critically important items, such as tax reform, national security, and filling vacancies across the Federal Government. We clearly have a lot to do in the coming weeks and months, but we will all keep working to tackle these issues as soon as possible.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

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



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MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 12:30 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant 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 ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Democratic leader is recognized.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I will speak on leader time. I know that the Senators from Colorado and Virginia wish to follow.

DACA

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, yesterday, the Trump administration made a terribly wrong decision to terminate the DACA Program. The Dreamers came to this country through no fault of their own. Many know no other country but this one. They work every single day in our businesses. They go to our schools. They serve in our military. They are a boon to our economy. All they want is to live, work, and contribute to this country like generations have done before. They want to be Americans, as so many people do, because we are such a great country.

Congress has the ability and, I believe, the responsibility to act and to protect those Dreamers before the program is completely terminated in 6 months. Why not do it right now? President Trump has called on Congress to act; so why don't we?

I would ask my friend the majority leader and Speaker RYAN to put a clean Dream Act on the floor in both Chambers in September. Every Democrat is ready to vote for that legislation. We know many Republicans in both Chambers would vote for it as well. It would likely pass without much fuss. But if we can't get that to happen, we will add it to vehicles that are moving—legislative vehicles—until we get it done. It is that important to us and to America. We could solve this problem tomorrow, rather than letting the fear of deportation hang over the heads of 800,000 Dreamers, who are studying and working, and some are in the military serving in the United States today.

So I would like, again, to say to Leader MCCONNELL and Speaker RYAN: Put a clean Dream Act on the floor in

a bipartisan vote. This body—and, I believe, the House—is ready to pass it.

In a short time, Leader MCCONNELL, Speaker RYAN, Leader PELOSI, and I will head to the White House to meet with President Trump. We have a lot we need to get done this month: an extension of government funding, raising the debt ceiling, passing aid for the victims of Hurricane Harvey, and protecting the Dreamers. So far, we Democrats haven't heard much in the way of a plan to accomplish all these goals from the Republican leadership, who hold the majority in both Houses of Congress, as well as the President's seat. I hope that this changes this morning. I look forward to hearing the President's plan and the Republican majority's plan for accomplishing all these things that Congress must accomplish in September.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Colorado.

NORTH KOREA

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about North Korea, the most urgent national security challenge for the United States and our allies in East Asia.

Secretary Mattis has said that North Korea is the most urgent and dangerous threat to peace and security. Admiral Gortney, previously the commander of the U.S. Northern Command, stated that the Korean Peninsula is at its most unstable point since 1953, when the armistice was signed. North Korea just conducted its sixth nuclear test, its most powerful to date. An early analysis from experts says:

North Korea has comfortably demonstrated an explosive yield in the range of at least 100 kilotons with this test.

That would be a considerable improvement from the 30 kiloton yield estimated in its fifth test and ideal for targeting U.S. cities—a primary objective in North Korea's pursuit of an ICBM.

Unless drastic and credible measures are taken today, we are fast heading for a nuclear showdown that could cost millions of lives on the Korean Peninsula.

Last year alone, North Korea conducted two nuclear tests and a staggering 24 ballistic missile launches. This year, Pyongyang launched 21 missiles during 14 tests, including the 2 tests of intercontinental ballistic missiles that are reportedly capable of reaching the U.S. homeland. During 6 years of rule as the North Korean dictator, Kim Jong Un has launched more missiles than his father and grandfather combined. Patience is not an option with the U.S. homeland now in the nuclear shadow of Kim Jong Un.

Our North Korea policy of decades of bipartisan failure must turn to one of immediate bipartisan success, with pressure and global cooperation resulting in the peaceful denuclearization of the regime.

Vice President PENCE stated during his visit to South Korea in April:

Since 1992, the United States and our allies have stood together for a denuclearized Korean Peninsula. We hope to achieve this objective through peaceable means. But all options are on the table.

I believe U.S. policy toward North Korea should be straightforward. The United States will deploy every economic, diplomatic, and, if necessary, military tool at our disposal to deter Pyongyang and to protect our allies. But time is not on our side. The international community needs to finally and fully join together to completely isolate this dangerous regime.

As a first step, North Korea should immediately be kicked out of the United Nations and many multilateral institutions from which they derive the benefits of global recognition. Next, the United Nations Security Council should enact a new resolution that imposes a full economic embargo on North Korea that bans all of Pyongyang's economic activities, including petroleum resources.

These economic tools need to be combined with robust military deterrent, including a U.S.-led international naval blockade of North Korea, in order to ensure a full enforcement of United Nations actions. We must also continue frequent show-of-force exercises by the United States and our partners in Seoul and Tokyo, enhanced missile defense activities, and assurances of extended U.S. nuclear deterrence to our allies. Kim Jong Un must know that any serious provocation will be met with a full range of U.S. military capabilities.

The road to peacefully stopping Pyongyang undoubtedly lies through Beijing. I am continuing to call on the administration to block all entities that do business with North Korea, no matter where they are based, from conducting any financial activities through the U.S. financial system. China is the only country that holds the diplomatic and economic leverage necessary to put the real squeeze on the North Korean regime. China accounts for 90 percent of North Korea's trade and virtually all of North Korea's exports. Despite China's rhetoric of concern, from 2000 to 2015 trade volume between the two nations climbed more than tenfold, rising from \$488 million in 2000 to \$5.4 billion in 2015—hardly the sign of cracking down on the rogue regime.

Beijing is the reason the regime acts so boldly and with relatively few consequences. China must move beyond an articulation of concern and lay out a transparent path of focused pressure to denuclearize North Korea. A global power that borders this regime cannot simply throw up its hands and absolve itself of responsibility. The administration is right to pursue a policy of "maximum pressure" toward North Korea, and we have a robust toolbox already available to ramp up the sanctions track—a track that has hardly been utilized to its full extent.

Last Congress I led the North Korea Sanctions and Policy Enhancement