



United States  
of America

# Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 115<sup>th</sup> CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 163

WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2017

No. 149

## Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable JOHN HOEVEN, a Senator from the State of North Dakota.

### PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Almighty God, from whom comes all holy desires, we thank You for all those who give their lives to serve You and country. May they realize that they are doing Your work on Earth when they strive faithfully to follow Your precepts.

Use our lawmakers to bring comfort, renewal, and empowerment to our Nation and world. Take them along yet untrodden paths, through perils unknown, to Your desired destination. May they live in peace and contentment, resting in the knowledge that You are directing their steps.

We pray in Your merciful 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 14, 2017.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the

Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable JOHN HOEVEN, a Senator from the State of North Dakota, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ORRIN G. HATCH,  
President pro tempore.

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

### RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

### NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION BILL

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, today the Senators will keep working to pass the National Defense Authorization Act, the legislation that authorizes the resources, capabilities, pay, and benefits that our servicemembers rely on to be successful.

The operational missions and tasks ahead for our men and women in uniform are as profuse as they are challenging. That is why it is essential that we meet our commitment to them by providing the equipment and the training they need to accomplish their missions. We should always remember that we have an all-volunteer force, and, in turn, we must support our warriors with the pay and benefits they and their families count on at home. This National Defense Authorization Act touches on every one of these issues.

We have already made an initial downpayment toward rebuilding the military and restoring combat readiness with the spring funding bill. Let's take this opportunity to add to that progress now.

As Chairman MCCAIN pointed out yesterday, this bill is the product of hard work from both sides. In committee, Republicans and Democrats offered scores of amendments that were ultimately adopted to the bill that is

before us, and all 27 of the Armed Services Committee members voted favorably to report this bill out. So there is no reason it shouldn't earn the same kind of bipartisan backing from the full Senate now.

I look forward to taking a vote in support of the men and women in uniform who courageously put their lives on the line to protect and defend each of us. As I do so, I will be thinking of the servicemembers and their families back in my home State of Kentucky, and I know so many other colleagues will be thinking of the servicemembers in their home States and those deployed abroad as well.

Let's keep working to bring this Defense authorization bill over the finish line.

### BURMA

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, in recent weeks the plight of the Rohingya has received great international attention. Even in the best of times, this beleaguered ethnic minority has eked out a marginal existence in Burma's Rakhine State. The Rohingya are stateless and have faced discrimination and isolation. Media reports indicate that their existence has gotten much worse over the past several weeks.

I am deeply troubled by the humanitarian situation along the Burmese-Bangladesh border and the violence in the Rakhine State must stop. But as I stated earlier this week, in my view, publicly condemning Aung San Suu Kyi—the best hope for democratic reform in Burma—is simply not constructive.

Yesterday I had a chance to speak with Suu Kyi on the phone. I would emphasize that she is the same person she was before. Her position in the Burmese Government is an exceedingly difficult one; she is State Counsellor. But, by law, her civilian government has virtually no authority over 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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Burmese military. According to the Burmese Constitution, the Army is essentially autonomous, and it has control on the ground of the Rohingya situation.

Unfounded criticism of Suu Kyi exaggerates her ability to command the military, which the Burmese Constitution does not actually allow her to do, and the political evolution of representative government in that country is certainly not over. She must work—and is working—to promote peace and reconciliation within her national context. But Burma's path toward a democratic government is not yet complete, and it will not miraculously occur overnight.

I would like to report to the Senate that during our call, Daw Suu agreed with the need for immediate and improved access of humanitarian assistance to the region, particularly by the International Red Cross, and she conveyed that she is working toward that end. She reiterated her view of the universality of human dignity and the pressing need to pursue peace and reconciliation among the communities in Rakhine State.

Daw Suu emphasized to me that violations of human rights will need to be addressed. Moreover, she stressed that the situation in the Rakhine State is a protracted, longstanding problem and that she is trying very hard to improve conditions. We will soon receive a follow-on briefing from her office.

Right now, the most important thing is for the violence of the Rakhine State to stop and to try to ensure the rapid flow of humanitarian aid through both Burma and Bangladesh to the affected areas to help the Rohingya refugees and internally displaced persons. That is where our focus should be.

Burma's path to representative government is not at all certain, and it certainly is not over. Attacking the single political leader who has worked to further democracy within Burma is likely to hinder that objective over the long run.

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#### TAX REFORM

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, comprehensive tax reform represents the single most important action we can take now to grow the economy and help middle-class families get ahead. It is the President's high priority. It is a priority we share here in Congress. The work of the tax-writing committees on tax reform goes back literally years, and it continues today.

This morning, the Senate Finance Committee will hold another in a series of hearings on comprehensive tax reform. Under the leadership of Chairman HATCH, the committee is working to simplify the tax system to make it work better for American individuals, families, and businesses. As Chairman HATCH knows, our current Tax Code is overly complex, with rates that are too high and incentives that often literally make no sense.

Senator HATCH understands how our broken code makes it harder for American businesses of all sizes to compete and win in an increasingly competitive global economy—how it actually incentivizes our companies to ship operations and American jobs overseas. Chairman HATCH and colleagues on both sides of the aisle understand how our broken code makes it harder for middle-class families to succeed—how it depresses wages, weighs down job creation, and crushes opportunity.

It is time to fundamentally rethink our Tax Code to make taxes lower, simpler, and fairer for American families. Fortunately, we have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to do that.

This morning's hearing in the Senate Finance Committee is a part of the wide-ranging conversation to shift the economy into high gear after 8 years of an Obama economy that too often hurt the middle class and seemed to hardly work for anyone but the ultrawealthy.

With lower taxes and a growing economy, jobs can come back from overseas and stay here, families can keep more money in their pockets to spend in the way they want to, and individuals can have access to more opportunities to buy a new home, to start a new business, or to send their kids to college. To put it simply: Our efforts are about more jobs, more opportunity, and more money in the pockets of the middle class.

Without tax reform, American families will be forced to continue living under an unfair Tax Code with rates that are too high, American jobs will continue to be shipped overseas, and small businesses will be increasingly uncompetitive against foreign companies. That does not benefit the middle class. These are the real consequences of the current Tax Code, and we should all want to work together to put an end to it. Our friends on the other side of the aisle say they support comprehensive reform of the system, and I hope they will join us in this effort in a serious way.

Finally, I thank President Trump and his team for their work throughout this tax process. We will continue to regularly engage with them, working together to bring relief to the American people.

I also thank Chairman HATCH for his leadership on this issue. Along with my colleagues, I will keep working to deliver relief and economic hope to our middle class.

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#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

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#### NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION BILL

Mr. SCHUMER. Good morning, Mr. President.

As we continue to work on the NDAA, the Democratic side is com-

mitted to working with the Republican side in good faith to finish this very important legislation. I am pleased that the managers have already been able to include more than 100 amendments in the substitute. I hope we can do another package today.

Senators MCCAIN and REED are managing this bill with their usual great skill, and I very much appreciate their hard work. Particularly, I know how important this legislation is to Senator MCCAIN and that he wants to see it through and see it through as soon as possible. We are going to help in that regard, of course.

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#### DACA AND BORDER SECURITY

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, last night, Leader PELOSI and I had a constructive meeting with President Trump and several members of his Cabinet.

One of our most productive discussions was about the DACA Program, to which we all agreed on a framework: to pass DACA protections and additional border security measures, excluding the wall. We agreed that the President would support enshrining the DACA protections into law. In fact, it is something, he stated, that for a while has needed to be done. The President also encouraged the House and Senate to act.

What remains to be negotiated are the details of border security with the mutual goal of finalizing all of the details as soon as possible. While both sides agreed that the wall would not be any part of this agreement, the President made clear that he intends to pursue it at a later time, and we made clear that we would continue to oppose it.

If you listened to the President's comments this morning and to Director Mulvaney's comments this morning, it is clear that what Leader PELOSI and I put out last night was exactly accurate and was confirmed again this morning by our statement, by the President's statement before he got on the helicopter to go to Florida, and by Director Mulvaney's comments. We have reached an understanding on this issue, but we have to work out details, and we can work together on a border security package with the White House to get DACA on the floor quickly.

Let me talk for a minute about border security. We Democrats are for border security. We passed a robust border security package as part of immigration reform in 2013, as the Acting President pro tempore knows better than anybody else. We are not for the wall, and we will never be for the wall. It is expensive, it is ineffective, and it involves a lot of difficult eminent domain—taking people's property—and, apparently, it is not being paid for by Mexico. In fact, I listened to FOX News this morning—I am starting to do that to see what is going on over there—and they keep saying that in the campaign the President promised a wall. Yes. He