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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable BEN SASSE, a Senator from the State of Nebraska.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal Spirit, who is enthroned on high, thank You for the happiness we receive because of fellowship with You. Keep us grateful for Your sustaining presence that surrounds us with Your favor.

Lord, bless and sustain our Senators. Remind them that You will not forget their faithful service to You and country. Deliver them from anxiety about what the future holds as they confidently trust You to care for them. Clothe them with Your righteousness, and prepare them to see Your face in peace. Help them to see themselves as Your servants, bringing the illumination of Your wisdom and peace to Capitol Hill.

God of our hopes and dreams, we bless 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, October 24, 2017.

To the Senate:

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

ORRIN G. HATCH,
President pro tempore.

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

NATURAL DISASTER EMERGENCY FUNDING

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, today, the Senate will pass an important measure to provide relief for communities that are struggling to rebuild after the natural disasters that have affected many different parts of our country. Soon, this emergency funding legislation will be on its way to the President for his signature.

With these new resources, Federal aid workers from FEMA and the rest of the administration can continue their critical recovery operations, including search and rescue missions, debris removal, and infrastructure repair, as well as providing much needed assistance to individuals and to families.

I will continue to monitor these disaster response efforts, and I will continue to engage with leaders both in Washington and on the ground. The Senate will also continue doing its part to help the victims recover.

TAX REFORM

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, on another matter, as we continue our work in the Senate, we look forward to

hearing the President's perspectives on how to advance our shared agenda, particularly the upcoming debate on bringing tax relief, economic growth, and jobs to Americans through tax reform.

Last week, the Senate passed a comprehensive, responsible budget that will help put the government on a path to balance and help put our economy on a road to robust growth. This week, the House plans to bring the budget to the floor for passage by Thursday. Once they pass it, we will have important legislative tools to help our economy grow through tax reform.

As we all know, after years of an economy that failed to live up to its full potential, the time is now to pass tax reform so that we can get America going again and growing again. We want to make taxes lower, simpler, and fairer. We want to close loopholes that are exploited by the wealthy. We want to make it easier to create new jobs in America and keep them here. In short, we want to take more money out of Washington's pockets and put more in yours.

These are the ideas that drive tax reform. They are shared by the President. They are shared by Americans in both political parties. They should be shared by Senators of both political parties, as well, and for many years, they actually were. The former chairman of the Finance Committee, Senator WYDEN, called our current Tax Code an "anticompetitive mess." The senior Senator from Michigan, Ms. STABENOW, expressed her concern for a tax code that incentivizes jobs to be shipped overseas, and our friend, the Democratic leader, wrote about our Tax Code's failure to help American workers compete.

Many Democrats called for action to get tax reform done. I hope that our Democratic friends will work with us now in a serious way to actually do it. After all, it is not as if the need for tax reform has changed since our friends

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



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made these statements as recently as a few years ago. The only thing that has changed is the occupant of the White House. That is the only difference. So let's get this done. The American people are counting on us.

NOMINATIONS OF SCOTT PALK AND TREVOR MCFADDEN

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, on one final matter, in addition to our important legislative priorities, the Senate is also working hard to confirm the President's excellent judicial nominees.

Last night, I filed cloture on two nominees for U.S. district courts.

Scott Palk has been nominated to serve as a district judge for the Western District of Oklahoma. He has served in multiple roles in the U.S. attorney's office in prosecuting organized crime and terrorism cases, and the Senate Judiciary Committee sent his nomination to the floor with an overwhelming bipartisan vote.

Another nominee, Trevor McFadden, was voted out of the Judiciary Committee with no opposition at all. He has been tapped to serve as a district judge for the District of Columbia, and as a former police officer, Mr. McFadden will bring a wealth of law enforcement experience to the bench.

The Senate will vote on both of these nominees this week, and then we will continue working to confirm President Trump's outstanding judicial nominees. I look forward to supporting these nominees, and I urge my colleagues to join me in voting to confirm them.

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.

PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, good morning.

Before I get into everything, I have just seen that President Trump has resumed his Twitter war with another Member of this body, our friend from Tennessee. It is long past time for the President to quit his daily compulsion of engaging in Twitter feuds and, instead, get to work for the American people. We have a lot of serious issues to deal with in this country. Our challenges are too entrenched and complex

to be solved if the President spends his time in a meaningless war of words on Twitter—today with this person, tomorrow with another.

We need President Trump to roll up his sleeves and get to work—to stop tweeting and start leading. Let me repeat that. Maybe the President will hear it. For the good of America, we need our President to roll up his sleeves and get to work—to stop tweeting and start leading.

NORTH KOREA

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, concerning North Korea, instead of undermining his Secretary of State and picking Twitter fights with Kim Jong Un that risk a war, President Trump should formulate a serious strategy to put the heat on China to pressure the North Koreans and resolve this crisis. China holds the cards here, but they have done nothing to help us or very little at least.

HEALTHCARE

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, on healthcare, President Trump should stop playing games with America's healthcare and publicly declare his support for the Alexander-Murray compromise.

President Trump is meeting with the Senate Republicans at their caucus lunch today, with Senator ALEXANDER and all other 11 Republican cosponsors of the bill. Why not provide some clarity? Why not say, as he has said in the past, that he supports Senator ALEXANDER's work? I believe many more Republican Senators want to sign their name onto this bill, but they are waiting to hear definitively from the President before they announce their support. After all, nearly every Republican here voted to extend the cost-sharing program already. It was part of their first healthcare bill. Every Democrat supports cost-sharing.

So the President has talked to me about wanting to be bipartisan on healthcare, and the best way to do it is to support Alexander-Murray. It is time that the President catches up to the rest of us and supports the bill. Right now he is the barrier.

Leader McCONNELL has said that if the President will sign it, he will put it on the floor of the Senate. It will get an overwhelming vote. It will then have to be put on the House floor. So Speaker RYAN will have no choice, or the rise in premiums will be on his back and the backs of his Members whom he seeks to protect.

REPUBLICAN TAX PLAN

Mr. SCHUMER. Probably most of all, when we talk about the President, it is time to stop tweeting and start leading on taxes. Mr. President, it is time to start really engaging with the substance of the tax plan that your staff

and congressional Republicans have put together because, Mr. President, your rhetoric does not match the reality on the tax bill.

The President has been selling his tax plan as a boon for the middle class. He told a group of truckers earlier this month that his tax plan is "a middle-class bill." He said: "The biggest winners will be everyday American workers." In his words, the Republican tax plan would bring about a "middle-class miracle."

President Trump, I urge you to look closely at the tax plan that your staff and congressional Republicans have put together. Ask the advisers around you what about this tax plan benefits the middle class and the everyday American worker more than the wealthy and the powerful, because trickle-down, if that is the only thing that benefits the middle class in your thinking, doesn't work. No one believes in trickle-down anymore except a small group of very wealthy business people who have undue influence on the Republican Party and, I hope, not on you, Mr. President.

Let's look at this plan that supposedly is a middle-class plan. It repeals the estate tax. That applies to a small number of families with estates over \$5 million. It lowers the rate on passthrough entities. That benefits wealthy law firms and hedge fund managers so they can pay less in taxes than the average citizen. It lowers the top rate while raising the bottom one. The cut in the corporate rate would hardly help the American worker. This is trickle-down. Our Republican colleagues don't talk about trickle-down because they know most of America doesn't believe in it.

Our corporations are flush with cash already. They are flush with cash. Giving them more cash is not going to change their behavior. What are they doing with this cash? Most of the large corporations are not creating jobs with the cash they now have. Stock dividends, stock buybacks, dividends, increases in CEO salaries—that is where it goes. So this bill is not a middle-class bill. I believe the President believes it is. You have to read it. No more tweeting, no more superficiality—read the bill. Don't let your advisers just walk in and say: Mr. President, it is a great, middle-class bill, and you just let them go by.

It has already been shown—not just by me but by many others—that Mnuchin and Cohen don't tell the truth about this bill, and they know better. The Tax Policy Center said that the top 1 percent of our country will reap 80 percent of the benefits from this plan. They also said, Mr. President, that it is a middle-class bill. According to the Tax Policy Center—no one has disputed it—a third of all middle-class taxpayers will see their taxes go up. Is that a middle-class tax bill, Mr. President, one in which taxes go up, not down, on nearly 30 percent of middle-class taxpayers?