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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Tuesday, November 28, 2017, at 12 noon.

Senate

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 2017

The Senate met at 4 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:

Let us pray.

Our Father God, thank You that we see You in the world around us, beholding Your works in the Earth and sea and sky. Your everlasting mercies sustain us, enabling us to borrow our heartbeats from You each day.

Today, be for our lawmakers an abiding and sustaining presence. May they live to serve and honor You, bringing glory to Your Name. Make them patient in debate, charitable in judgment, and slow to anger. Lord, empower them to defend and maintain the right, as they seek justice and freedom for all.

We pray in Your sacred 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.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. ERNST). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Dabney Langhorne Friedrich, of California, to be United States District Judge for the District of Columbia.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 5:30 p.m. will be equally divided between the two leaders or their designees.

If no one yields time, the time will be equally divided.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The majority leader is recognized.

TAX REFORM

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, during the last decade, our complex Tax Code left hard-working families behind and allowed the wealthy and well connected to get ahead. It is so bad that one small business owner in Paducah, KY, recently wrote to my office asking for relief because, as he said, "Taxes are suffocating my company, and me personally."

The pain isn't just being felt in Kentucky. It is an urgent problem nationwide. Families and job creators are

doing their best to get ahead, but too often our Tax Code keeps them from reaching for the American dream. Working families and small businesses in our country deserve better than our outdated Tax Code, and that is what we are trying to deliver.

Tax reform represents the single most important thing we can do right now to spur economic growth, help support good jobs, and boost the middle class. This is our once-in-a-generation opportunity, and we should meet the challenge.

Overhauling our Tax Code can mean more money for small businesses to hire, to invest, and to expand. It can mean families keeping more of what they earn to save for a rainy day or an emergency. This relief can even mean getting one step closer to sending a child to college, buying a new car, or saving more for retirement.

This week, the Senate will continue our years-long effort toward tax reform. Under the leadership of Chairman HATCH, the Senate Finance Committee reported out legislation to replace our noncompetitive, complex, and outdated Tax Code.

Through dozens of hearings, substantial hard work, and an open amendment process, the committee has produced a bill that would prioritize the middle class and small businesses so they can keep more of their hard-earned money.

Our plan doubles the child tax credit, preserves the adoption tax credit, and roughly doubles the standard deduction to reduce how much income is taxed in the first place.

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



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Put it all together, and a typical middle-class family of four making a median family income could see a tax break of around \$2,200. As families sit around the table to balance their budgets and plan for the future, this money will make a significant impact.

In addition, our tax reform proposal will provide much needed relief for low- and middle-income families by repealing ObamaCare's individual mandate tax. By ending an unpopular tax from an unworkable law, this plan can help those who need it most.

The bottom line is this: We want to take more money out of Washington's pocket and put more money into the pockets of American families. To accomplish this goal, we will continue to consider the plan under regular order. Every Member will have a chance to offer amendments on the floor, and then we will vote.

There are many places in this legislation where we should all—Republicans and Democrats—be able to agree. For instance, our Democratic colleagues have the opportunity to help us end tax incentives that contribute to American jobs going overseas. That sounds like something our friends across the aisle should support. In fact, many of them have identified those incentives as the fundamental problem in our current Tax Code. This is our chance to put an end to it. I hope they will join us in our effort to help jobs and investments stay right here at home.

I am proud to continue working with my colleague to get this legislation one step closer to the President's desk. Let's keep working together to deliver tax relief for the American people.

Now, Madam President, on another matter. Later today, the Senate will consider two more talented nominees to the Federal judiciary. First, we will vote to confirm the nomination of Dabney Friedrich to serve as district court judge for the District of Columbia.

NOMINATION OF GREGORY KATSAS

Next, we will vote to advance the nomination of an exceptionally well-qualified nominee to the Federal judiciary, Gregory Katsas to serve on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit. After graduating from Harvard Law School, Mr. Katsas clerked for Judge Edward Becker of the Third Circuit and Justice Clarence Thomas, both on the DC Circuit and on the U.S. Supreme Court. He then joined the litigation group at a prominent law firm focusing on State and Federal appellate litigation, including arguing before the Supreme Court.

In 2001, Mr. Katsas became the Deputy Assistant Attorney General supervising the Justice Department's appellate staff of the Civil Division. The Senate later confirmed him by a voice vote to serve as Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Division, where he was responsible for overseeing hundreds of lawyers and some of the government's most complicated litigation. For his work, he was awarded the Ed-

mund Randolph Award for outstanding service, the highest award given by the Department.

In a letter to the Senate Judiciary Committee, former Attorney General Michael Mukasey expressed his support for Mr. Katsas's nomination. This is what Attorney General Mukasey had to say:

It was my great privilege to work with Greg when he headed the civil division and argued many of the most difficult and challenging cases the Department faced at that time. Greg worked tirelessly to defend the interests of the United States in court, whatever his personal views about them may have been.

Former Attorney General Mukasey, who has also previously served as a Federal district court judge, went on to say that "it is Greg's character, temperament and virtue that most set him apart, and that suit him to serve as a Circuit Judge. There are many smart lawyers in Washington, and probably many nice ones," he concluded, "but I know of no others who have Greg's unique combination of legal skill coupled with humility, integrity, and good judgment."

That high praise was echoed by many of the other officials who knew Mr. Katsas well at the Justice Department. A large group of them wrote to the Senate Judiciary Committee supporting his nomination.

Greg is an exceptionally talented and brilliant fellow lawyer. His commitment to public service and academic qualifications are impeccable. In addition, we can attest to Greg's thoughtfulness, temperament, and character.

Furthermore, a group of distinguished attorneys who have, in their own words, "worked with Greg or litigated against him in the Supreme Court or federal courts of appeals, or are otherwise familiar with his work" penned a letter of support for Mr. Katsas's nomination.

"We hold a broad range of policy and jurisprudential views" they wrote, "but [we] are united in our view, based on our experience and knowledge of Greg's work, that he is highly qualified to serve on the D.C. Circuit."

Once he completed his time at the Department of Justice and returned to private practice, Mr. Katsas continued to impress his colleagues with his legal skill and judgment.

His firm's managing partner wrote a letter, also signed by partners from around the globe, recommending his nomination. Here is what they wrote:

Greg is a truly great legal thinker with a well-earned reputation for integrity, fairness, and respect for others. He has been a brilliant, conscientious advocate—

They continued—

for the firm's clients in the Supreme Court and appellate courts throughout the nation in a wide variety of difficult, high-profile cases.

Mr. Katsas is an impressive individual who is well-qualified to serve on the DC Circuit.

I thank Chairman GRASSLEY, once again, for his outstanding work in

moving President Trump's judicial nominees to the floor. I look forward to confirming the nomination of Ms. Friedrich and advancing the nomination of Mr. Katsas later today.

I urge all of my colleagues to join me in supporting their nominations.

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. SCHUMER. Madam 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 Democratic leader is recognized.

WELCOMING OUR COLLEAGUES BACK

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I welcome you and the Senator from Texas, and all of our colleagues, back after our Thanksgiving break. I had my parents, 94 and 89, at our Thanksgiving dinner with all of their children and grandchildren and cousins and "thises and thats," so I have a lot to be thankful for. I am blessed to have my mom and dad see their whole family and be so happy about it.

WORK BEFORE THE SENATE

But now, Madam President, we are back, and we have a lot of work to do before the end of the year and precious little time to do it. Funding for the government expires a week from this Friday. Eight hundred thousand Dreamers are waiting to hear whether they can live and work in the only country they have ever known. Almost 9 million children are waiting for us to reauthorize the Children's Health Insurance Program, and millions more are waiting for us to restore funding for community health centers—the most cost-effective, and often only, healthcare lots of people can get.

We also need to fund the cost-sharing program that holds down premiums and out-of-pocket costs for low-income Americans because the administration refuses to do so. Texas, Louisiana, Florida, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands are desperately in need of additional aid to recover from the natural disaster that God brought on them.

Also, the debt ceiling must be raised again, and in short order.

So we need to come to agreements on all of these issues, and quickly.

To that end, the four leaders will meet with the President tomorrow. Hopefully, we can make progress on an agreement that covers those time-sensitive issues and keeps the government running and working for the American people.

REPUBLICAN TAX PLAN

We could be working on all of these issues this week, but, instead, the majority is pursuing a partisan tax plan at a breakneck pace. Since the Republicans released their first draft of the tax bill a few weeks ago, we have had 1 week of markup in the Senate Finance Committee during which the bill shape-shifted on several occasions.