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## Senate

The Senate met at 3 p.m. and was called to order by the Honorable JONI ERNST, a Senator from the State of Iowa.

### PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on us this day. Radiate Your hope and power through our lawmakers, creating in their hearts an expectation of Your best for them, our Nation, and our world. May they face their challenges with total confidence in the triumph of Your unfolding providence.

Lord, give our Senators the wisdom to seek ways to work together to find creative solutions to the crucial issues of our time. As they seek to serve Your purposes for their lives in this generation, may they remember the sacrifices of those who fought and died for the American dream.

Lord, change and decay surround us, but You are the same yesterday, today, and forever.

We praise You and pray in Your great 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 legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,  
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,  
Washington, DC, December 4, 2017.

To the Senate:

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

ORRIN G. HATCH,  
President pro tempore.

Mrs. ERNST thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

### CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

### EXECUTIVE SESSION

### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the Nielsen nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Kirstjen Nielsen, of Virginia, to be Secretary of Homeland Security.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, today the Senate will continue to fulfill its important responsibility to confirm critical nominees for President Trump's administration. We will do that by voting to advance the nomination of Kirstjen Nielsen, the President's choice to serve as Secretary of Homeland Security.

As my colleagues know, this is an incredibly important position within our

government. With responsibilities ranging from cybersecurity, to protecting our borders, to the continued recovery efforts of the recent natural disasters, the Department of Homeland Security requires strong leadership to get the job done. Ms. Nielsen is a qualified candidate with the talent and experience to succeed. As Chief of Staff to the previous DHS Secretary, Gen. John Kelly, she understands the daily operations of the Department and shares our goals for its future.

In addition, her previous tenure with the Department makes her an ideal candidate to be ready to lead the agency on day one.

Ms. Nielsen is an experienced professional who will help lead the Department as it faces constantly evolving threats. I look forward to advancing her nomination later today, and I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting Ms. Nielsen for this critical national security post.

#### GOVERNMENT FUNDING BILL

Madam President, on another matter, this week Congress will consider short-term funding legislation to provide resources to address many important issues facing our country. The House recently released its legislative text to fund the government through December 22. I look forward to our colleagues' consideration of that measure.

This bill—one without any controversial policy riders—will continue government funding and give the House and Senate time to complete their work on a long-term solution. It will keep the government open and functional, and it includes critical resources for our national defense and to give States certainty to continue the Children's Health Insurance Program while the bipartisan work on CHIP re-authorization continues.

Congressional leaders continue to work with the administration on a long-term funding proposal to help agencies accomplish their goals and to plan for the future.

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



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As we wait for the House to take the next steps, I encourage my colleagues in the Senate to review the legislation. We will pass it before the end of the week.

## TAX REFORM BILL

Mr. President, on one final matter, last week, the Senate passed a critical tax reform bill to jump-start the American economy by putting more money into the pockets of hard-working families and small businesses, creating more jobs and economic opportunity, and taking steps to ensure that jobs and business stay right here in America.

This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity, and we are meeting the challenge.

Soon, the House and Senate will meet in conference to produce a final bill so that we can send it to the President's desk. Then the American people can begin to enjoy the relief.

I want to take a few minutes to thank a number of people who were key to getting us to this point. First, President Trump and Vice President PENCE, who fought for the promise they made to the American people to cut their taxes. Their tenacity, commitment to the effort, and engagement with the Senate were invaluable. I look forward to working with them on the many other priorities we plan to deliver for our country. The President and Vice President are great allies, and we will accomplish much, working together.

I also want to acknowledge the efforts of Secretary Mnuchin, Director Cohn, General Kelly, Marc Short, and many others at the White House who worked with us on this effort.

Speaker RYAN, Ways and Means Committee Chairman BRADY, and our friends over in the House have done great work, as well, and we are looking forward to getting a final bill to the President's desk soon.

To my leadership team, who provide good counsel and good humor even in the most trying of times, thank you—most especially to the majority whip, JOHN CORNYN, who is not only a valued colleague but a trusted friend. JOHN and his whip team, led by Monica Popp, helped navigate many challenges along the way. There is no doubt we wouldn't have made it this far without them.

The chairman of the Finance Committee, ORRIN HATCH. His many years of service in the Senate have brought the expertise and steady hand we needed to get this bill written, out of committee, and on to the floor. Not only is ORRIN an expert at legislating, but he also is a trusted friend, and I thank him for his many years of work to get us to this point.

The chairman of the Budget Committee, MIKE ENZI. There are few people around here who understand this complicated process better than Chairman ENZI, and we are grateful to him as well.

The chair of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, LISA MUR-

KOWSKI. This is an important moment for Alaska and for American energy security.

To the committee staffs: Finance, led by Jay Khosla; Energy and Natural Resources, led by Brian Hughes; Budget, led by Betsy McDonnell; and, of course, the Senate's dean of the tax counsels, Mark Prater—thank you.

There are a number of other Members who have been critical to the process. Senators THUNE, PORTMAN, TOOMEY, and SCOTT took on the yeoman's work in the Finance Committee as we worked to unite our conference on a bill that everyone could support. I will never forget the time and energy they have put into this effort, and I can't thank them enough. My staff calls them the "core four" of tax reform.

I would also like to extend my gratitude to the Senate Parliamentarians, who worked long hours and weekends with Republicans and Democrats alike to apply the rules of the Senate in a fair and unbiased manner.

The floor staff, doorkeepers, those working for the Sergeant at Arms, Secretary of the Senate, and Architect of the Capitol—those behind the scenes who provide essential support for the Senate whenever we are in session. You are the reason this institution functions so well. In light of the challenges before us, we appreciate your commitment and your service.

To the members of the United States Capitol Police, who stand constant guard and protect the Members, staff, and the millions of visitors who travel here, we are always grateful for your service.

We all know that without our teams on the floor and in the cloakroom, this place simply wouldn't run the way it should. Secretary for the majority, Laura Dove, Robert Duncan, and the whole cloakroom team are invaluable to the work we do each and every day. I would like to thank them for the hours they put in, no matter what the issue of the day may become.

Finally, to my own team—first to Sharon Soderstrom, who leads my staff with focus and commitment to success. I am lucky to have her by my side every day. She makes each of us better by not letting us forget why we are here; that is, to do the right thing for the American people. We have seen a lot of debates together over the last 10 years, and her counsel is always steady and straightforward. She truly is the best of the best.

Don Stewart. Stew keeps us all on our toes but always with a smile. The communications team of Robert Steurer, Antonia Ferrier, David Popp, Stephanie Penn, Kevin Grout, and many more helps communicate in a challenging news environment every single day, and I am so thankful for their efforts.

Hazen Marshall, who has been in the trenches on this every day since we started our work on this bill. Hazen may be the most likeable guy in the Senate but with a backbone of steel.

Jane Lee, my budget lead, smart, cheerful, and determined. To my leader office policy team that gets to work with the committees as well as folks outside the Senate to help keep everyone informed, field questions, and address concerns, I want to thank them all. Scott Raab, Terry Van Doren, and Erica Suares each played a role in this, and I want to thank them. Phil Maxson and my personal office staff, including Katelyn Conner and Liz Strimer, who each day help my whole team keep Kentucky in the forefront of anything we are working on, I can't thank them all enough.

To many others in both my State operation, especially Terry Carmack, and my leader office team, while I can't name everyone by name, know my appreciation goes to each of you as well. Of course, Stef Muchow, my director of operations, keeps everything running, is always working, and I can't imagine this success without her.

Finally, to the man who has been the steady hand in the tax reform effort in my office, Brendan Dunn. His leadership and counsel over the last several months has been absolutely unparalleled. Brendan, many days, worked around the clock to hear from our Members on what they were hearing from our constituents and helped us get to passage of this incredibly significant piece of legislation. He worked with the committees to draft language, rework ideas, present thoughts, and prioritize Member feedback. I couldn't be more proud of Brendan and the work he has done.

Brendan, you have my deep gratitude and admiration for how you have helped manage this critical bill. It is an honor to call you a colleague and also a friend.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

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

## RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Democratic leader is recognized.

## REPUBLICAN TAX PLAN

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, in the early hours of Saturday morning, under the cover of darkness, the Republican majority rushed through one of the worst, most hastily considered pieces of major legislation I have seen in my time in the Senate.

The bill will cause one of the greatest transfers of wealth to corporate America and the already wealthy, while working America picks up the tab. Millions of middle-class families will pay higher taxes under the Republican plan in only a few short years. Because the bill is unpaid for, the deficit will skyrocket, cannibalizing resources for education, scientific research, infrastructure, and our military, endangering Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid.