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Senate

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.

Loving God, sovereign of our Nation, keep our frailty before us that we might set our hearts on You. Today, let Your peace go with our lawmakers, guiding them in their work and protecting them from life's storms. Lord, remind them that those who trust You will not lack any good thing. Though our Senators face many challenges, rescue them from each difficulty. May they remember that they live this day only once and should therefore strive today to bless all the people they can in every way they can. Give them the wisdom to be receptive to Your guidance, always trusting You to direct their steps.

We pray in Your great 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.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. ERNST). The majority leader is recognized.

NEW YORK CITY ATTEMPTED TERROR ATTACK

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, as we continue to learn more details about the attempted terror attack this morning in Manhattan, I wish to commend the law enforcement and intel-

ligence community that quickly reacted to the attack. Their courage in the face of danger protected the lives of those around them.

NOMINATION OF LEONARD STEVEN GRASZ

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, this week, the Senate will consider three more outstanding individuals nominated by President Trump to serve on our Nation's Federal circuit courts.

For 8 years, we had a President who selected judicial nominees based on a so-called "empathy standard." It was an ideological litmus test designed to find nominees who would favor certain groups or individuals over others. While that may sound like a good standard for the party in the case for whom the judge has empathy, it doesn't sound so great if you are the other person.

On the other hand, President Trump has nominated talented individuals who will ensure that the Federal judiciary maintains its particular role in our constitutional system. The judicial nominees before the Senate this week are each well-credentialed and have the integrity and temperament to serve our Nation on the circuit courts. They are dedicated to upholding the rule of law and giving every litigant a fair shake. That is how the American people expect judges to decide cases, and the Senate is working to confirm President Trump's nominees, who will do just that.

First, the Senate will consider the nomination of Leonard Steven Grasz to serve on the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals. Then it will consider the nomination of Texas Supreme Court Justice Don Willett to serve on the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals. Finally, later this week, the Senate will consider the nomination of James Ho to serve on the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals. Each of these nominees will make

strong additions to the Federal bench, and I look forward to considering them in the coming days.

I wish to once again commend Chairman GRASSLEY for his leadership of the Senate Judiciary Committee. His excellent work has allowed us to bring these nominees to the floor.

Later today, the Senate will advance the nomination of Mr. Grasz, a talented individual with experience in both private practice and public service.

After graduating from law school at the University of Nebraska, Mr. Grasz began a distinguished career in law. Working as the chief deputy attorney general of Nebraska for nearly 12 years, he excelled, representing the State of Nebraska in numerous appellate cases, including before the U.S. Supreme Court.

Nebraska Governor Pete Ricketts, along with five other top State officials, wrote a letter to the Judiciary Committee supporting Mr. Grasz's nomination. Here is what they had to say:

Steve has become a leading expert on state and federal constitutional law. His demeanor and temperament have earned the respect of Nebraskans across the political spectrum in our state.

Mr. Grasz has won the support of prominent Nebraskans from both sides of the aisle. Our former colleague, Senator Ben Nelson, came to know Mr. Grasz when Senator Nelson was the Governor of Nebraska. Senator Nelson wrote:

Steve won my respect by putting considerable skills to work as an effective legal advocate for our state.

We sometimes found ourselves disagreeing on policy; nevertheless, I quickly learned that Steve was the kind of consummate professional who is capable of putting whatever personal views he may have aside when appropriate in his capacity as a public servant.

He was an asset to our state, and Nebraskans benefitted from having such a capable and thoughtful professional in public service.

Furthermore, the Obama administration's U.S. attorney for Nebraska

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



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worked with Mr. Grasz in the State, and she wrote in support of his nomination:

Steve has always enjoyed a reputation for honesty, impeccable integrity and dedication to the rule of law.

He possesses an even temperament well-suited for the bench, and always acts with respect to all [who] interact with him.

In addition, a letter from the current and previous presidents of the Omaha Bar Association stated that the Omaha legal community supports Mr. Grasz's nomination "without hesitation." The letter goes on to say that he "possesses the legal expertise, professionalism, character, and ethics that are demanded of a Judge on the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals."

The local legal community—both government officials and private attorneys—overwhelmingly attest not just to Mr. Grasz's impressive qualifications but to his commitment to fairness and the rule of law.

Through his decades of legal practice, Mr. Grasz has shown that he is the right choice to serve on the Eighth Circuit. I am proud to join with our colleagues from Nebraska in supporting Mr. Grasz's nomination. I look forward to voting to advance this nomination later today and to confirming all three of these circuit court nominees this week.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. 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 to consider the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Leonard Steven Grasz, of Nebraska, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Eighth Circuit.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

RECOGNIZING JAMES WILLIAMS AND NICK CLASON

Mr. HATCH. Madam President, before I turn to the main portion of my remarks, I would be remiss if I failed to recognize two staffers who were instrumental in helping us pass the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act earlier this month—James Williams, my senior policy adviser, and Nick Clason, a talented young staffer. Both worked long hours to help make tax reform a reality. I wanted to take just a brief moment to recognize them for the late nights they

spent helping me to hash out the details of this bill. They are some of the hardest working members of my staff, and I hope they know how much I appreciate them.

AMERICA'S ROLE IN GLOBAL AFFAIRS

Madam President, I wish to turn to a subject of great importance to our national security. This morning's terrorist attack reminded all of us that danger is never far away from our Nation's shores. While details about the bombing in New York are still emerging, we already know one thing for certain: This was an attack not only on the American people but on the principles that we stand for. It was an attack on our freedom and our very way of life.

The violence we witnessed this morning stands as a stark reminder that America has many enemies. Overseas, animosity toward the United States grows stronger as the world grows ever more chaotic, so today I wish to speak on America's role in these turbulent times.

As the Trump administration works to return our country back to its rightful role as the leader of a broken world, you will find my foreign policy recommendations today to be not only intrinsically American but also inherently good. My solution to the chaos that now grips the world is the simple principle articulated by President Reagan over 30 years ago in his "evil empire" speech. Addressing the National Association of Evangelicals, he said these words:

America is good. And if America ever ceases to be good, America will cease to be great.

To be sure, we find ourselves in a world very different from that which President Reagan faced. Today, the structured diplomatic environment we once operated in has come into question with the fall of local governments in much of the Middle East. Global alliances, while strong in the commitments and connectivity among member nations, are weak in direction and long-term purpose. Political narratives of states—once stable and predictable—must today compete with the conversations being had on the streets and in the classrooms by those with access to mobile phones and social media.

Since Reagan's time, the world has not only grown more complicated but also more dangerous. The threat of state-on-state military showdowns seems imminent—particularly with North Korea and Iran.

Where we had achieved military successes, we remain reluctant to declare victory, as is the case with ISIS, and to deal with the most intractable issues, such as the conflicts in Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq, we seem to rely on partner nations that often work at cross purposes with our own objectives.

How has the United States engaged with this chaos? In many cases, President Obama sought to ignore it altogether. Indeed, if his foreign policy could be boiled down to two words,

they would be these: "Stay out." The Obama administration spent the better part of 8 years making disengagement a cornerstone of American foreign policy, captured by the euphemism "off-shore balancing"—in other words, deferring to local actors to manage regional problems.

The Obama doctrine offered easy answers to complex problems, but easy answers are rarely the right answers, and a gradual U.S. withdrawal from an increasingly chaotic world under President Obama only made matters worse. Thanks to the hands-off approach of his predecessor, President Trump inherited a truly unprecedented state of world disorder.

Despite these great challenges, our ability to achieve good in the world has not diminished. If we are to achieve good in the world—if we are to restore peace and stability in these troubled times—then we must first rediscover our purpose in global affairs. We must make an honest assessment of where we have gone wrong in the past and how we can improve in the future.

In our engagement with the world, we seem to have drifted far from how we used to do things. The foreign policy of President Obama, for example, chose to transact in one of two words: "threats" and "interests." How big is the threat to national security that ISIS or a nuclear Iran possesses? What is the U.S. interest in Syria? How do we preserve American security and interests in the South Pacific? Under this myopic approach, anything that didn't fit neatly into either a threat or interest was of little importance. The foreign policy of the Obama years put the United States in a short-term responsive mode, with little capacity to ask about the future.

Rediscovering our purpose in the world requires us to look beyond mere considerations of threats and interests. It requires us to reconnect with our core values by making them central to our foreign policy. Foremost among those values is promoting freedom. Freedom is what we stand for as a nation. As President Reagan said:

America is freedom—freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of enterprise. And freedom is special and rare. It's fragile; it needs protection.

President Bush carried this tradition, squarely identifying the perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks as enemies of freedom. As he keenly observed, what divided the United States from its adversaries was not faith, not skin color, not gender or race, but hatred of America and the freedoms it stands for.

President Bush did not mince words in describing exactly who our enemy was. Following the 9/11 attacks, he described those who committed the attacks as belonging to "a fringe form of Islamic extremism that has been rejected by Muslim scholars and the vast majority of Muslim clerics, a fringe movement that perverts the peaceful teachings of Islam."

In his use of the phrase "Islamic extremism," President Bush was not