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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.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.

Give ear to our words, O Lord. Listen to the sounds of our intercession. We look to You with the vibrant expectation that You can transform dark yesterdays into bright tomorrows. We are grateful that we can fulfill Your purposes because of the strength we receive each day from You.

Lord, show our lawmakers Your compassion. Give them a peace that transcends human understanding. May they face life's challenges with the faith that nothing is impossible for You. Increase their faith, filling them with a more complete trust in You and with a willingness to follow Your guidance.

We pray in Your Holy 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 PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

CONGRATULATING SENATOR HATCH: THE LONGEST SERVING REPUBLICAN SENATOR IN AMERICAN HISTORY

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I would like to begin this morning by directing some remarks to the Chair. I would like to recognize an important milestone of his, but let me start off this way.

The President pro tempore is something of a legend in the Beehive State. He is a published author. He has gold and platinum albums hanging on the wall, and he is a great fighter for his home State.

It is not hard to see why Utahns keep sending him back. It is not hard to see why they chose to make him the longest serving Senator in Utah history.

Senator HATCH has come a long way from the grinding poverty of his childhood, and just recently, he passed yet another significant milestone. He became the longest serving Republican Senator in American history. Now, that is impressive.

Yet, given what we all know about our colleague, it isn't all that surprising. Senator HATCH is almost always in the mix on the most consequential issues of the day. He has been a leading voice on everything from labor law to judicial nominations, religious freedom to tax reform. This expansive policy expertise helps explain why his colleagues chose him to serve as chairman of three major committees: HELP, Judiciary, and today the powerful Finance Committee.

Senator HATCH remains as much of a key player as ever in advancing the Senate's agenda. His guidance will be crucial as we continue to move forward with repealing and replacing ObamaCare, as we turn to tax reform, and as we consider the President's Supreme Court nominee.

The tasks before us are as diverse as they are challenging, but I know our colleague from Utah is up to the charge.

The man known as "Honest Orrin" is one of the kindest and most gracious guys you will ever meet. He is a man of deep faith and principled conviction.

But Senator HATCH is anything but a pushover. He is a fighter for Utah and for the Nation. He is a proud conservative. He has simply learned the art of disagreeing—sometimes strongly—without being disagreeable. That is

how you build friendships with both Robert Bork and Ted Kennedy. That is how you establish yourself as one of the most productive legislators in modern history, as Senator HATCH has.

He isn't slowing down any time soon. He is actually getting more done than ever. He just passed dozens of bills out of the Senate last Congress, and many of them became law. Now our friend, the Finance Committee chairman, is in a unique position to continue having an impact on a range of issues, and I am sure he will.

I hope he still finds some time to keep up with his songwriting career. You should listen to his stuff. It is good. He has penned everything from a love song on the "Ocean's Twelve" soundtrack to his world-famous Hanukkah song. Senator HATCH would want me to remind you that it ranked somewhere between the Black Eyed Peas and Lady Gaga on the hit charts. "Everyone," he says, "loves my music"—everyone.

You have to admire that confidence.

We look forward to seeing the great things he will be able to achieve for Utahns, for the country, and for the music industry in the years to come.

It has been my distinct privilege to recognize our colleague in the Chair today. I would ask colleagues to join with Senator HATCH's family—his wife of nearly 60 years, Elaine, their 6 children, 23 grandchildren, and 19 great grandchildren—in marking this important milestone.

ATTORNEY GENERAL JEFF SESSIONS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, it was great to see our now-former colleague, Senator Sessions, confirmed as the Nation's 84th Attorney General yesterday. We all had to watch as he was subjected to a terrible campaign of unfair and deeply personal attacks. He endured it all with grace, though, and with the same considerable dignity, respect, and courtesy we have long

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



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known Senator Sessions for. We are going to miss him in the Senate, but we couldn't be more proud of him as he begins this new position.

SENATOR-DESIGNATE LUTHER STRANGE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, of course the departure of one Senator typically heralds the arrival of a new one. Today is no different. I hope colleagues will join me in welcoming Alabama's newest Senator later today, LUTHER STRANGE, who will be sworn in this afternoon.

You won't have much trouble finding him. He will be the tallest guy around here. Now, you would expect nothing different from a former college basketball player. Senator THUNE and Senator COTTON last night were somewhat distressed by the notion that they would be replaced by an even taller Senator, and that will happen later today.

LUTHER STRANGE, like the man who preceded him, is a devoted Eagle Scout. He shares his interest in the law too. He even argued successfully before the Supreme Court. It is notable experience to bring to any job, especially this one, and especially at a time when we are actively involved in the process of considering a new—and superbly qualified—nominee to the Court.

We are looking forward to the contributions that Alabama's newest Senator will make. He will have the chance to get started right away. We have important work to do, and that starts with confirming more of the qualified Cabinet nominees who are before us.

NOMINATION OF TOM PRICE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, the nominee currently before us is the President's pick for Health and Human Services Secretary, Congressman TOM PRICE, a physician. Dr. PRICE knows more about health care policy than just about anyone. He doesn't just understand health care policy as a policymaker—although he does deeply—he also understands it as a practicing physician. He gets the real-world impact.

He has a clear-eyed view about Washington's capacity to do great harm, even with the best of intentions, just as he is excited about his potential to do great good.

He can start having a positive impact almost as soon as he is confirmed. He can start bringing stability to the health care markets ObamaCare has harmed. He can start bringing relief to the families ObamaCare has hurt. I know he is ready to get to work with Congress to move toward truly patient-centered health care—care that prioritizes the needs of patients over the needs of Washington.

The American Medical Association supports him and says: “[H]is service as a physician, state legislator and member of the U.S. Congress provides a depth of experience to lead HHS.”

The Association of American Medical Colleges supports him and says: “[H]e will bring a thoughtful, measured approach to tackling the wide range of issues affecting the nation's health.”

And the Healthcare Leadership Council couldn't be more enthusiastic. “It is difficult,” they said, “to imagine anyone more capable of serving his nation as the Secretary of Health and Human Services than Congressman Tom Price.”

That is high praise. It also happens to be accurate.

The American people need Dr. Tom PRICE applying his practical knowledge as a doctor and as a legislator at the Department of Health and Human Services, an agency in great need of new leadership.

This job is a big one. There is no doubt that. It requires overseeing some of the Nation's most important programs, like Medicare and Medicaid, and helping to protect public health at the CDC and helping to find cures at NIH and helping to ensure at the FDA that those cures can make it to the patients.

It is a big job, but TOM PRICE is the right man for it. We shouldn't wait a moment longer to confirm him. As soon as we do, we will turn to the nomination of Steve Mnuchin to lead the Department of the Treasury.

NOMINATION OF STEVEN T. MNUCHIN

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I will have more to say about Mr. Mnuchin tomorrow, but let me say this. For the last 8 years, Americans had to endure an economy that failed to live up to its potential. Part of the problem was the regulatory avalanche of the last administration. It is time to finally move toward a modern regulatory framework instead, one that appropriately manages risks while promoting growth and job creation. The President has started providing relief already that will move us toward that goal. Steve Mnuchin can help do more.

He also has an important role to play in the effort to make our tax system simpler and more conducive to the kind of economic growth and job creation we should all want. It won't be easy to get that done. We need someone like Steve Mnuchin working with both parties to make it happen.

The Treasury nominee is smart, capable, and he has impressive private sector experience. We need him confirmed as soon as possible so he can begin to tackle these challenges and reverse the last 8 years of economic heartache.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ROUND). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the nomination of THOMAS PRICE, of Georgia, to be Secretary of Health and Human Services, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Thomas Price, of Georgia, to be Secretary of Health and Human Services.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

Mr. SCHUMER. Will the Senator yield?

Mr. HATCH. I will be happy to yield.

Mr. SCHUMER. I thank my colleague.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

CONGRATULATING SENATOR HATCH: THE LONGEST SERVING REPUBLICAN SENATOR IN AMERICAN HISTORY

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, before our great friend from Utah gets up, I have other remarks; I will let the Senator from Utah speak before those. But I want to join my distinguished friend the majority leader in recognizing the Senator from Utah, who has become the longest serving Republican Senator in history.

We have been friends for a long time. He has given me guidance. He keeps telling me he is going to straighten me out one of these days—a work in progress, I guess we would think—but he is a terrific guy. He is a decent man. He is a caring man. He is an honorable man.

He has been a great partisan when he has to be, but he has shown tremendous independence on many different occasions. In fact, probably my mentor around here, Senator Kennedy, loved working with Senator HATCH, and they accomplished great things for America.

Even just recently, on an issue like Puerto Rico, there was not much gain for him personally. I don't think there is a large Puerto Rican population in Provo or Ogden. But he cared and he knew there was a problem. We spent late nights trying to figure out what to do, and while the solution may not have been as good as some of us would have wanted, it was a solution, and it wouldn't have happened without Senator HATCH. So we can say that on issue after issue after issue, he has risen to the occasion and has been the best of the Senate.

It is a fitting honor that he is here. Last time around, when he was not thinking of running, I think in the hearts of most Democrats there was hope that he would run again, and that was because we so esteem him.

I want to join the majority leader in congratulating Senator HATCH and wish him many, many more years of success both personally—I know he has a large and wonderful family, and we