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Senate

The Senate met at 3 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:

Almighty God, the sovereign Lord of nations, empower our lawmakers to be as faithful to others as You have been to them. May they be willing to show patience in dealing with the shortcomings of others in the same way that You have shown them mercy and long-suffering. Lord, help them to seek to respect the beliefs and ideas of others, being tolerant even to those with whom they may disagree. Give them the wisdom to refuse to do to others what they would not want done to themselves.

Lord, we commit this day to You, totally desiring to work for Your glory.

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 PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. YOUNG). The majority leader is recognized.

CONGRATULATING KENTUCKY COLLEGE BASKETBALL TEAMS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, there is a simple reason nearly every Kentuckian looks forward to March—college basketball. I would like to take a moment to recognize several teams that are already making the State proud by winning their conference tournaments.

This weekend, the women of the University of Louisville won their first-ever ACC tournament title. Finishing the regular season with a record of 29 to 2, the Cardinals are currently ranked third in the Nation. Led by ACC Coach of the Year Jeff Walz and ACC Player of the Year Asia Durr, these talented women are looking to add yet another title.

So are the Murray State Racers. Its men's team won the Ohio Valley Conference championship and earned its first NCAA tournament appearance since 2012. It will look to build on the longest winning streak in the Nation.

Also in Louisville, the Bellarmine Knights men's team earned its second straight conference championship and a two-seed in the NCAA Division II tournament.

At Thomas More College, both the men's and women's teams are celebrating conference championships which earned them spots in the NCAA Division III tournaments.

Lindsey Wilson College won its conference title and is headed back to the NAIA Division I tournament for the first time since advancing to the Fab Four in 2013.

The Union College men's team clinched its fifth consecutive conference title. The Kentucky Christian Lady Knights took home the Mideast Region title as well.

I congratulate all of these conference-winning Kentucky teams, their coaches, and, of course, their dedicated fans.

JUDICIAL NOMINATIONS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, on another matter, we will vote on the nominations of three more talented individuals today whom the President has asked to serve as Federal district judges: Karen Scholer for the Northern District of Texas, Tilman Self for the Middle District of Georgia, and Terry Doughty for the Western District of

Louisiana. These are three excellent nominees, and I encourage all of our colleagues to vote in support of each of them.

TAX REFORM

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, on one final matter, it has been 73 days since President Trump signed historic tax reform into law.

It feels as though it has been longer than that because, practically every day, another major national employer announces a new commitment to invest in American workers because of tax reform. Every day, we hear about more local businesses realizing new savings and putting it toward equipment, expansion, and employees. Every day, we hear about how bonuses, rising wages, expanded benefits, and lower taxes are giving middle-class families a whole lot more breathing room. Yet, every day, we are reminded that some of our friends across the aisle are still desperately trying to minimize this good news. Democratic leaders have tried to say that these new jobs, raises, bonuses, and business expansions amount to no more than "crumbs."

I leave the final verdict to the hard-working families across the country, including the many Kentuckians from whom I hear. In the meantime, the economic data are painting quite an optimistic picture.

Last week, the Labor Department announced that weekly jobless claims had reached a 48-year low. Let me repeat that. Fewer Americans are filing for unemployment today than at any time since 1969. The labor market is tightening; employers are competing for talent; and workers and their families are coming out on top.

In January, Americans' real disposable income rose more quickly than it had since April of 2015. That is the biggest jump in spending money available to American families, accounting for tax rates and inflation, in nearly 3

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



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years. That is more money to save for a home purchase or a college fund. It is more to save for retirement or to spend on a family vacation. U.S. consumer confidence is higher today than it has been since the year 2000, and, last week, news broke that U.S. manufacturing is expanding at its fastest pace since 2004.

Look, it is not complicated. The bill passed by the Republicans in Congress last year was designed with a very simple philosophy in mind: that when we put more of Americans' hard-earned money back in their own pockets, they will know what best to do with it, that when we level the playing field and take weight off the shoulders of small businesses, they will help their communities thrive, and that when we welcome investment from entrepreneurs and job creators, instead of discouraging it, the economy will respond in kind.

The idea was simple enough, but as we are already seeing, because the Republicans in Congress and the President were able to overcome lockstep partisan opposition on the other side and get tax reform across the finish line, that simple idea is having an extraordinary impact.

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 resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Karen Gren Scholer, of Texas, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of Texas.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The assistant Democratic leader.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

DACA

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, today is the day—March 5—the deadline imposed by President Trump on those who are being protected and allowed to stay in the United States under the DACA Program.

It was last September 5 when President Trump's Attorney General held a press conference and said: That is it. The protection that is currently given

to 780,000 young people in America to allow them to stay in this country and pursue their dreams will end on March 5 of 2018—today—780,000 who were brought to the United States as infants, toddlers, children, and teenagers, who have lived their lives in this country, who have gone to school, who have never had a serious run-in with the law, who have gone through criminal background checks, come up with \$500 filing fees, and who were given permission under an Executive order by President Obama to legally stay in this country for 2 years at a time. During that period, they would not be deported, and they would be allowed to work.

Who are these young people? They are known as the Dreamers, although President Trump hates that term. They are known as the Dreamers because they represent young people who went to school in America, stood up in their classroom every day and pledged allegiance to that flag. This is the only country they have ever known. This was to be the country of their future, but at some point in their lives, a member of their family sat down and said: We have to have a serious conversation. You see, we never filed the papers when we brought you to this country as an infant, and right now you are undocumented in the United States of America.

What that means is that any minute, there could be a knock on the door and you and perhaps your entire family would be asked to leave. I introduced a bill called the DREAM Act 17 years ago. Senator HATCH was my cosponsor when I introduced it. The purpose of the DREAM Act was to say to these young people: We will give you a chance. Though you are illegal in the eyes of the law in the United States—undocumented—we will give you a chance to earn your way to legal status, give you a chance someday to be a citizen of the United States. It will not be easy. There is no helping hand for you. If you want to go to college, there will be no Federal assistance for you. You are going to have to make it on your own. You will have to work and work harder than perhaps the person sitting next to you at their desk in high school. See if you can do it. If you can, we will give you your chance.

That is what the DREAM Act said. It passed with a majority vote in the Senate many times, but it never quite made it to 60 votes, which it needs to become the law of the land.

President Obama, when he was a Senator in this Chamber, was my colleague from Illinois. He cosponsored the DREAM Act with me. So the time came when he was elected President, and I wrote him a letter. Dick Lugar, Republican of Indiana, joined me in that letter. He supported the DREAM Act when he served in the Senate. We wrote to President Obama and said: Can you do anything to give these young people a chance, to spare them from deportation? He worked on it for

1 year. Then President Obama came up with something called DACA, a program by Executive order that gave these young people their chance—780,000 of them went through the background check, paid their filing fee, and proved they were eligible.

They were spared for 2 years at a time and allowed to stay in this country. During the course of the campaign, President Trump said many strong words about immigration. We remember them well—it is hard to forget—the words about the wall, words about Mexican rapists, on and on, but he seemed to have a soft spot in his heart for these kids. Many times he would say: We have to give them a chance. They are different.

The very first time I met President Donald Trump was minutes after he had been sworn in. It was at a luncheon here in the Capitol.

I went up to him and said: Congratulations. I want to thank you for the kind words you said about the Dreamers and those protected by DACA.

He said: DICK, don't worry about those kids. We are going to take care of those kids.

That is what President Trump said on January 20, 2017. I brought it up to him several times too. It is an issue that is important to me, but, more importantly, it is an issue that is critical to the future of these young people.

Then, what happened on September 5 of last year, just 9 months after the President was sworn in? His Attorney General held a press conference and said: That is the end of the protection for these young people. As of March 5, 2018, no protection.

Then he challenged Congress. He said: Pass a law. Do what you are supposed to do here in the House and Senate. Pass a law that will protect these young people.

A number of us took up the President's challenge. We had a bipartisan effort, six of us—three Democrats and three Republicans—and we worked through some really hard issues on immigration and on these young people. I want to salute my colleagues who were part of that: LINDSEY GRAHAM, Republican of South Carolina; JEFF FLAKE, a Republican of Arizona; CORY GARDNER, a Republican of Colorado; joined with myself and MICHAEL BENNET, a Democrat of Colorado; BOB MENENDEZ, a Democrat of New Jersey, and we put together an approach that gave these young people protection and a fighting chance to prove they deserve to stay in America.

We felt pretty good about it. The President called a meeting in the White House on January 9—I remember these dates. I will always remember them—with about 25 Members of Congress, Democrats and Republicans, House and Senate. He held an open press conference for an hour, which is unusual and rarely done in the White House.

We talked about DACA and we talked about Dreamers and we talked about