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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable RAND PAUL, a Senator from the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Our Father in Heaven, increase our faith until we are no longer awed by life's challenging seasons. Direct our Senators in their work, using them to fulfill Your Divine purposes. Lord, remind them that all things are possible to those who believe in Your prevailing providence. We acknowledge this day our great need of Your sustaining power so that we can walk without stumbling or slipping along life's pilgrim pathway. Help us to remember that faith without works is dead.

We pray in Your merciful 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, March 14, 2018.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable RAND PAUL, a Senator

from the Commonwealth of Kentucky, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ORRIN G. HATCH,
President pro tempore.

Mr. PAUL thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

HONORING OFFICER SCOTTY HAMILTON

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, hearts are heavy in Pikeville, KY, this morning. Last night, Officer Scotty Hamilton, a 12-year veteran of the Pikeville Police Department, was shot and killed in the line of duty.

The investigation is ongoing. My Kentucky staff and I are monitoring the situation closely.

For now, our sincere condolences go out to his family, friends, and colleagues at the Pikeville Police Department.

Officer Hamilton leaves behind a wife, a young daughter, and a community that is safer for his service.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, now on an entirely different matter, this will be a busy day for the Senate. Today, Senator THUNE and our colleagues on the Commerce Committee will continue their hearings on rebuilding America's infrastructure.

Notably, five Cabinet Secretaries will testify: Secretaries of Labor, Commerce, Energy, Agriculture, and Transportation will all share the administration's ideas for cutting redtape, streamlining permitting, and aligning Federal resources with local needs.

I am grateful for the Trump administration's commitment to this issue,

and I hope this week's hearings, along with the ongoing work of our colleagues on Environment and Public Works, Appropriations, and other committees, will keep building momentum.

Bipartisan results are achievable this year, starting with billions of added funding for infrastructure improvements in the budget agreement, and extending to the work of many committees in the months ahead.

ECONOMIC GROWTH, REGULATORY RELIEF, AND CONSUMER PROTECTION BILL

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, today we will also finish considering the bipartisan banking reform bill championed by Senator CRAPO. The Economic Growth, Regulatory Relief, and Consumer Protection Act is co-sponsored by a quarter of the Senate—split down the middle between Republicans and Democrats—and was advanced earlier this week by two-thirds of our colleagues. That is because this modest but essential bill tackles a problem that hurts communities in red States and in blue States. It hurts rural areas, farm towns, suburbs, and urban neighborhoods.

The problem is this. The Dodd-Frank Act has proven to be far too blunt of an instrument for regulating our financial system. Regulations meant for Wall Street are crushing Main Street.

Community banks and credit unions play a vital role in our economy. Smaller lenders provide more than 50 percent of small business loans and nearly 80 percent of agricultural loans, but they are struggling to keep their heads above the tide of complicated regulations and compliance costs. Many are going under, and when they do, research shows that access to capital shrinks for small businesses, farmers, ranchers, and low-income Americans.

Senator CRAPO's legislation helps to fix this. It streamlines regulations and

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



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tailors the rules so smaller lenders aren't caught up in the web of regulations aimed at the biggest banks.

Senators had and still have a wide diversity of views on Dodd-Frank, but all of us should at least agree that Wall Street and Main Street are very different, and that one-size-fits-all is a poor way to address this issue.

I look forward to voting to pass this bill later on today.

TAX REFORM

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, on one final matter, this afternoon President Trump will visit a Boeing production facility in St. Louis. He will hear from local business leaders about how tax reform is giving them room to invest more and hire more.

Missouri's senior Senator tried to block tax reform on a party-line vote. Fortunately, their Republican Senator voted to let them realize this prosperity.

For months now, the headlines have been filled with businesses large and small using tax reform to give workers bonuses, pay raises, and new benefits. But raises and bonuses aren't the only ways that tax reform will help hard-working families.

Thanks to the efforts of Senator HELLER and others in the committee, tax reform doubled the child tax credit and extended it to more middle-class families. When they file their taxes next year, families will be able to take \$2,000 off of their tax bill for every qualifying child.

My friend the Democratic leader said repeatedly that tax reform would do nothing to help American workers. The Democratic leader in the House said the law would bring about "Armageddon." I am not sure where they get their predictions, but I don't think they will carry much water with middle-class families in Missouri or Indiana or West Virginia or certainly in Kentucky.

For brand-new parents facing one expense after another, the \$2,000 credit will more than cover the cost of a brand-new washer and dryer set or a new refrigerator. For a middle-class family of four, the credit is \$4,000. That more than covers the standard down payment on a used car, priced at the national average, or it could kick off a college savings fund.

Just "crumbs"—really? Maybe adding thousands of dollars to family budgets looks like crumbs in New York or San Francisco, but to most Americans around most kitchen tables, that is real money, and so is the adoption tax credit, which keeps the IRS's hands off more of the hard-earned money that adoptive families need to cover expenses.

Last autumn, I met a wonderful family from Franklin, KY, who adopted their son from Ethiopia in the face of many hurdles and difficulties. His mother wrote my office. She told me:

Our sweet boy is worth every dime and tear.

They were counting on that tax credit, as were many other families. Republicans made sure this credit was preserved.

Here is how that Kentucky mother described the impact. She said:

The tax credit we will receive . . . has allowed us to pay off the last remaining debt we owed. Such a weight lifted off our shoulders.

New pro-family tax cuts and new pro-family tax credits, all while protecting existing pro-family provisions that Americans rely on—that is what every Democrat voted against, but fortunately, it is what every Senate Republican voted for. So the American people won in the end.

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.

ECONOMIC GROWTH, REGULATORY RELIEF, AND CONSUMER PROTECTION ACT

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 2155, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2155) to promote economic growth, provide tailored regulatory relief, and enhance consumer protections, and for other purposes.

Pending:

McConnell (for Crapo) modified amendment No. 2151, in the nature of a substitute. Crapo amendment No. 2152 (to amendment No. 2151), of a perfecting nature.

Mr. McCONNELL. 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. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COTTON). Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Democratic leader is recognized.

GUN VIOLENCE

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, at this moment all across the country, students are walking out of school for 17 minutes in memory of the 17 Americans who died at Stoneman Douglas High School 1 month ago today.

Here on the floor of the Senate, I join with those students in remembering the fallen students and teachers of Stoneman Douglas. I join with them in remembering the beautiful children who died at an elementary school in Newtown. I join with them in remem-

bering a long line of American children who perished in the slow-moving tidal wave of gun violence that is consuming our country—all the unopened presents and uncelebrated birthdays, all the empty chairs at dinner tables, graduations, and holidays. These kids had their whole lives ahead of them.

This has gone on for too long. When a disease plagues our people, we seek a cure. When we see drug addiction stealing the lives of our youth, we get together here in Congress and try to do something about it. Why is it that when it comes to gun violence—which is responsible for just as many, if not more, deaths—we throw up our hands and pretend there is no solution?

We know there are commonsense things we could do. Close the dangerous loopholes in the background check system; ensure that anyone with a criminal history or history of mental illness can't get their hands on a gun; and, yes, we should debate the assault weapons ban because weapons of war have no place on our streets and no place in our schools.

While so many students today are mourning their friends and classmates, we in Congress are in a unique position. We alone have the ability to change our laws to make America safer and, God willing, prevent another one of these massacres—these horrible, horrible massacres.

What will we do with that awesome responsibility? I was here on the floor of the Senate when this body failed to advance any legislation in the wake of Sandy Hook. The shame we all felt, and America felt, as this body was unable to act because a powerful special interest seems to have its grip on too many of our colleagues. Well, let this time be different. Let this time be different.

In a moment, I will read the names of 17 Americans—14 children—who were killed in the horrific attack at Stoneman Douglas High School. I am joined by a good number of my colleagues who wish to read the names of children and other victims who died at the hands of gun violence in their States. May their memories—may their memories—inspire us to act.

Alyssa Alhadeff, Martin Duque Anguiano, Scott Beigel, Nicholas Dworet, Aaron Feis, Jaime Guttenberg, Christopher Hixon, Luke Hoyer, Cara Loughran, Gina Montalto, Joaquin Oliver, Alaina Petty, Meadow Pollack, Helena Ramsay, Alex Schachter, Carmen Schentrup, Peter Wang.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, I join with my colleagues today to give the country a sense of the scope of this epidemic. We have tried every means to move our colleagues to action, but in remembering the names of people who have been lost, it is a reminder that there is a human face behind every single one of these numbers, and behind that victim there is a trail of trauma—family members, friends, classmates—that is difficult to unwind.