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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:

Let us pray.

Our Father, God, as we bow our heads in Your presence, may we also lift our hearts to the guidance of Your Divine Providence.

Remind our lawmakers that they will seek and find You when they have passionately pursued You. May Your Holy Spirit bring them new life and hope, making them equal to their experiences and responsibilities. Lord, lead them on the upward way to a higher plane of unity and peace as they strive to hold aloft Your banners of truth, justice, and love.

Lord, we will continue to rejoice in You, for You are the God of our salvation.

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.

LETTERS OF RESIGNATION

The VICE PRESIDENT. The Chair lays before the Senate the letters of resignation from former Senator Thad Cochran of Mississippi and of CINDY HYDE-SMITH from the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce, which, without objection, are deemed read and spread upon the Journal and printed in full in the RECORD.

The letters follow:

U.S. SENATE,
Washington, DC, April 1, 2018.

Hon. PHIL BRYANT,
Governor, State of Mississippi,
Jackson, Mississippi.

DEAR GOVERNOR BRYANT: Serving as a Senator from Mississippi has been one of the great privileges and honors of my life. However, after much deliberation, I have decided I must leave the Senate before the end of my term.

I am, therefore, resigning my Senate seat effective 11:59 p.m. EST, April 1, 2018.

Respectfully,

THAD COCHRAN,
U.S. Senator.

STATE OF MISSISSIPPI, DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE AND COMMERCE,
CINDY HYDE-SMITH, COMMIS-
SIONER.

March 30, 2018.

Governor PHIL BRYANT,
Office of the Governor, Jackson, MS.

DEAR GOVERNOR: I hereby tender my resignation as Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce, effective 11:59pm, April 1st, 2018.

Sincerely,

CINDY HYDE-SMITH.

CERTIFICATE OF APPOINTMENT

The VICE PRESIDENT. The Chair lays before the Senate the certificate of appointment to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Thad Cochran of Mississippi. The certificate, the Chair is advised, is in the form suggested by the Senate.

If there be no objection, the reading of the certificate will be waived and it will be printed in full in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the certificate was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

STATE OF MISSISSIPPI

CERTIFICATE OF APPOINTMENT

To the President of the Senate of the United States:

This is to certify that, pursuant to the power vested in me by the Constitution of the United States and the laws of the State of Mississippi, I, Phil Bryant, the Governor of said State, do hereby appoint Cindy Hyde-Smith a Senator from said State to represent said State in the Senate of the United

States until the vacancy therein caused by the resignation of William Thad Cochran, is filled by election as provided by law.

Witness: His excellency our Governor Phil Bryant, and our seal hereto affixed at Jackson, Mississippi this 2nd day of April, in the year of our Lord 2018.

By the Governor:

PHIL BRYANT,
Governor.

C. DELBERT ROSEMAN, JR.,
Secretary of State.

[State Seal Affixed]

ADMINISTRATION OF OATH OF OFFICE

The VICE PRESIDENT. If the Senator-designate will now present herself at the desk, the Chair will administer the oath of office.

The Senator-designate, Cindy Hyde-Smith, escorted by Mr. WICKER, advanced to the desk of the Vice President; the oath prescribed by law was administered to her by the Vice President; and she subscribed to the oath in the Official Oath Book.

The VICE PRESIDENT. Congratulations, Senator.

(Applause, Senators rising.)

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

REMEMBERING ZELL MILLER AND DANIEL AKAKA

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I would like to begin with a few words of tribute to two retired colleagues who passed away since we were last together.

On Friday, March 23, former Senator Zell Miller departed this life at the age

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



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of 86. Those of us who served with Zell knew him as a kind and honorable man and a committed public servant.

He rose from a childhood without electricity and running water well into his school years to serve the State of Georgia as Governor and later as Senator. Zell Miller did so with grit and determination, never afraid to buck partisanship in favor of his principles.

Also, this past Thursday, Senator Daniel Akaka, our former colleague from Hawaii, passed away at the age of 93. He worked closely with Senator Inouye and others to advocate for his State. As the Senator himself once put it, he always preferred being a workhorse to a show horse.

The Senate offers our condolences to their families.

WELCOMING SENATOR HYDE-SMITH

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, on an entirely different matter, we just welcomed a new colleague to this Chamber today. Senator CINDY HYDE-SMITH was sworn in. She became the 51st Senator and the first woman to represent Mississippi here in the Senate. Senator HYDE-SMITH brings experience as a State legislator and as the Mississippi commissioner of agriculture and commerce.

I know I speak for all Senators on both sides of the aisle in welcoming our new colleague. We look forward to working together and continuing this record of accomplishment for the American people.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, on another matter, this week the Senate will turn to one of its most important constitutional responsibilities, the personnel business. We have a number of nominees to consider in the next several days.

First is Claria Horn Boom, President Trump's pick to serve as a Federal district judge for both the Eastern and Western Districts of Kentucky. Through her work in both the public and private sectors, Ms. Boom has distinguished herself as a problem-solver, a trusted adviser to clients and her community.

Letters in support of her nomination share a theme: She has the skills and experiences to excel as a district judge. "High standards, ample preparation, and a fears intellect"; "unfailingly thoughtful, gracious, and diligent"—these are just some of the ways Ms. Boom is described by those she served and worked with in Kentucky. The Judiciary Committee came to the same conclusion, advancing her nomination on a voice vote.

Later today the full Senate will vote to advance this talented and non-controversial nominee, and then I hope we will be able to quickly confirm her.

Then, in the coming days, we will consider several more judges and im-

portant nominees for the Department of Labor, the EPA, and the National Labor Relations Board. These and many other positions remain vacant nearly a year and a half into the Trump administration.

Qualified nominees stand ready, but Senate Democrats are using the procedural playbook to obstruct and delay. In many cases, for example, they are insisting that the Senate exhaust postcloture time even on unobjectionable district court nominees who have gone on to overwhelming confirmation—for examples, Walter Counts, who was confirmed 96 to 0, or Karen Gren Scholer, who was confirmed 95 to 0.

I will have more to say on these partisan tactics in the coming days. For now, let me make one thing clear. The Senate's workweek will not end—will not end—until all of these amply qualified nominees are confirmed.

TAX REFORM

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, now on one final matter, there is just one more week until the deadline for Americans to file our 2017 tax returns. It is not exactly a national holiday, but this year there is a silver lining. This April is the last time Americans will file taxes under the old, outdated Tax Code that is on its way out, thanks to historic tax reform.

A year from now, families will be filing under a simpler and fairer tax code that lets them keep more of what they have earned and send less to the IRS. They will benefit from a doubled standard deduction, from major expansions in key provisions like the child tax credit, and, of course, from significantly lower tax rates.

All told, the average family of four earning a median income of around \$70,000 could see a tax cut of over \$2,000. But let's remember, the American people do not need to wait until next year to start seeing the fruits of once-in-a-generation tax reform.

Job creators are already implementing plans to hire, expand, and invest in their American workers. Millions of workers have already received word of a tax reform bonus, permanent raise, or other new benefits, such as paid family leave policies or expanded retirement assistance. That includes thousands of employees of Southwire, a wire manufacturer that employs hundreds of Kentuckians at its location in Hawesville. For hard-working men and women at Southwire, tax reform means bonuses and expanded educational opportunities.

The benefits of our new 21st century Tax Code are certainly no secret. As Americans put the finishing touches on their tax returns under the old, outdated system for the last time, there is good news to look forward to, and there is good news that is actually already here.

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 2629 AND H.R. 5247

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I understand there are two bills at the desk due for a second reading en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The leader is correct.

The clerk will read the bills by title for the second time.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2629) to improve postal operations, service, and transparency.

A bill (H.R. 5247) to authorize the use of eligible investigational drugs by eligible patients who have been diagnosed with a stage of a disease or condition in which there is reasonable likelihood that death will occur within a matter of months, or with another eligible illness, and for other purposes.

Mr. McCONNELL. In order to place the bills on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I object to further proceedings en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection having been heard, the bills will be placed on the calendar.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

WELCOMING SENATOR HYDE-SMITH

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, first, let me welcome back my fellow Senators after a productive State work period. Let me welcome our newest Senator, CINDY HYDE-SMITH, the junior Senator from Mississippi. She is the first woman to represent the State of Mississippi, and I welcome her warmly to this Chamber.

REMEMBERING DANNY AKAKA

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, over the past weeks, as we have been away, we have heard of the passing of two of our Senators: Zell Miller and Danny Akaka.

I would like to say a few words about Danny Akaka, who was a good friend of mine. In everything he did, he was a soldier, a teacher, and a statesman. He embodied the spirit of Hawaii. He was so sincere in his beliefs and such a kind and gentle man that Senators went out of their way to help him and, of course, he fought so hard for his State. He taught us so much in his modesty, in his persistence, and in his love of his constituents.

So for all he taught us, for his service and for his friendship, we say "mahalo" one final time.

CONGRATULATING SENATOR DUCKWORTH

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, it was TAMMY DUCKWORTH who first informed me of Senator Akaka's passing, and it shows God's rhythms of life, the passing of Danny Akaka, after a long service and wonderful life, and now we have