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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable CINDY HYDE-SMITH, a Senator from the State of Mississippi.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

God of wisdom and order, who filled the universe with mysteries of Your power, restore us to the image of Your glory. Create in us clean hearts, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Lord, we thank You for Your life-giving Spirit flowing through us to reinforce our faith, hope, and love.

Inspire our Senators. Give them truth in their innermost being, a sense of dedication in their work, and a spirit of cooperation that they may labor together for the good of this land we love. May they strive to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with You.

We pray in Your great 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).

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, April 19, 2018.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable CINDY HYDE-SMITH, a

Senator from the State of Mississippi, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ORRIN G. HATCH,
President pro tempore.

Mrs. HYDE-SMITH thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

PROTECTING MOMS AND INFANTS ACT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, we all know the grief the opioid crisis produces: broken families, stolen opportunity, lost loved ones. This epidemic has been especially severe in my home State of Kentucky, claiming lives at a record pace.

In light of this urgent problem, I am proud Congress is fighting back. We have passed substantial bipartisan legislation to give communities the resources they need. The most recent government funding bill provided billions of dollars of additional support. But the work to end the suffering continues.

One of the most heartbreaking facts is the skyrocketing number of infants who are born dependent on opioids. Defenseless children start their lives suffering from addiction. That is why in 2015 I sponsored, along with Senator CASEY, the bipartisan Protecting Our Infants Act. As the first law to specifically address prenatal opioid exposure, it directed the Secretary of Health and Human Services to review the subject of opioid abuse in prenatal and infant patients. Our bill tasked the Secretary with developing strategies to fill the gap in opioid research and programming and provide recommendations for preventing further harm to expecting mothers and newborns.

Now it is time to build on our success and better protect vulnerable children, so today I will introduce the Protecting Moms and Infants Act. This legislation directs the Secretary of HHS to report on the implementation of the strategies developed in the previous bill. It would have the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention develop educational materials to better inform doctors and expecting mothers about opioid alternatives. It authorizes increased funding for competitive Federal grants to help organizations address this particular part of the opioid crisis. This bill continues our years-long efforts to protect the most vulnerable.

I thank Senator CASEY and my colleague from Kentucky, Congressman BRETT GUTHRIE, who is sponsoring companion legislation in the House.

Medical professionals, law enforcement officials, and many across Kentucky are working every day to bring an end to the misery of the opioid epidemic. This legislation will continue that fight, and I urge my colleagues to support it.

NOMINATION OF JAMES BRIDENSTINE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, yesterday we voted to advance JIM BRIDENSTINE's nomination to lead the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

JIM is a decorated pilot and combat veteran. His tenure in the House of Representatives testifies to his understanding of the issues facing today's space program and to his advocacy of NASA modernization. But, as is often the case, this well-qualified nominee has waited too long for a vote. NASA has been led by an Acting Administrator for a record 15 months. So I hope my colleagues will join me in voting to confirm JIM BRIDENSTINE today.

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



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NOMINATION OF MIKE POMPEO

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, speaking of personnel business, I wish to say a few words this morning about Mike Pompeo, our CIA Director and the President's extraordinary choice to serve as Secretary of State.

In recent days, the world learned that Director Pompeo had undertaken initial conversations with Kim Jong Un directly, over the Easter weekend, to discuss denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula. Obviously, he has the confidence of the President—engaged in the most sensitive undertaking one could imagine in today's world—and yet so many on the other side are suggesting they have reservations about this outstanding nominee.

Pursued with clear-eyed realism and clear objectives, this is a worthy effort. North Korea has been a perplexing problem for President after President after President, and Mike Pompeo is on the point of this effort, which hopefully will finally lead to some outcome. Although every Commander in Chief has insisted it would be unacceptable for North Korea to obtain a nuclear-armed intercontinental ballistic missile, it is this administration that finds itself having to actually achieve that objective because time has run out. So, as a matter of policy, it would be hard not to be encouraged by the fact that there were actually talks—direct talks—underway.

Based on Director Pompeo's impressive record at the CIA, the North Koreans undoubtedly view him as credible, determined, and insightful. Isn't that what we would want in a Secretary of State? The quiet nature of these discussions reflect how serious they were. The mission also speaks to Mike Pompeo's future as Secretary of State.

Here is a man who—through mastery of the daily briefings he receives, counsel on our Nation's most sensitive intelligence activities, and proven leadership in returning our CIA to the aggressive gathering of foreign intelligence—has inspired the confidence of not only the national clandestine service but, very importantly, the Commander in Chief. Hallmarks of Mike's leadership are listening, trusting career staff, acting decisively, and treating everyone fairly.

I have recently heard some critics claim that the Trump administration places too little emphasis on diplomacy. In truth, the public statements of Secretary Mattis, former Secretary Tillerson, and former National Security Advisor McMaster have signaled a clear preference for aggressive, realistic diplomacy over potentially risking American lives. I have heard Secretary Mattis say over and over again that the last thing he wants to do is use the military. He wants to buy time so diplomacy can work. But, regardless, in confirming Mike Pompeo as Secretary of State, the Senate can ensure that the Nation has a chief diplomat who enjoys the complete confidence of the President. Isn't that

what we should all want, regardless of party?

Those who claim to want a larger role for diplomacy should match those words with action and vote to approve him. What would be a better example of diplomacy than just what we were talking about—the visit to North Korea and direct conversations with Kim Jong Un.

We all know Mike's resume. He is a graduate of the U.S. Military Academy and Harvard Law School. He has served as a U.S. Army officer, on the House Intelligence Committee, and as Director of the CIA. In my view, Mike Pompeo is uniquely qualified to restore esprit de corps throughout the ranks of the Foreign Service. It is hard to imagine a better choice for Secretary of State than Mike Pompeo.

PHILOSOPHICAL DIFFERENCES

Mr. MCCONNELL. Now, one final matter. We have been talking all week about a big philosophical difference between Democrats and Republicans. Tax reform has thrown it into stark relief.

On the one hand, the Democrats' governing philosophy is about consolidating as much money and power as possible right here in Washington, DC. Under President Obama, we watched Democratic leaders turn every challenge the country faced into an excuse to raise taxes and impose regulations. Our dear friends on the other side are the party of taxation, regulation, and litigation as well. We saw who wins under this top-down philosophy and who loses.

America did not recover quickly enough from the great recession, and the unimpressive growth we did see during the Obama administration was extremely uneven. According to one study, nearly three-quarters of the job growth and 90 percent of the net population growth from 2010 to 2016 went to metropolitan areas with more than 1 million residents. The occupant of the Chair and I represent a lot of rural and smalltown folks. They didn't benefit from whatever job creation there was; it went to the big cities all across America. In the wealthiest coastal cities, there was some improvement, but the simple fact is that the Democratic policies left the rest of the country behind. In small towns and smaller cities and rural areas, opportunities dried up, paychecks stayed flat, and hope for a more prosperous future began fading.

That is what President Trump and this Republican Congress were elected to change. Our governing philosophy is very different. We think that more of the American people's hard-earned money should be left in their own hands—their hands—to spend or save as they see fit. We think government needs to give workers and job creators some breathing room. We think every American community deserves to flourish. So we passed record-setting rollbacks of harmful Federal rules that had thrown a wet blanket on the econ-

omy, and we enacted sweeping tax reform to help families and reignite growth.

What are the early results? Consumer confidence hit a 14-year high, jobless claims a 45-year low—jobless claims, a 45-year low—and millions of Americans receiving bonuses, pay raises, and new benefits. Ninety percent of wage earners expected to see lower income taxes than last year. Ninety percent of wage earners—lower income tax rates than last year.

The philosophical difference is especially stark in States where one Senator votes to let all of this good news happen, but the other Senator tried to stop it from taking place.

Bonnie Brazzeal from Missouri told President Trump last month that she is using her tax reform bonus to save for retirement.

In West Virginia, Sean Farrell says he is using expanded 529 savings eligibility to afford Catholic school tuition for his children.

Chelsea Hatfield from Indiana is using her permanent raise to pay for community college classes, working toward her associate's degree.

At some point, the Democratic Senators from these States I just mentioned will have to explain why they voted to stop all that from happening. They will have to tell Bonnie and Sean and Chelsea that they agree with the Democratic leader, who has said Washington knows how to spend money better than citizens do.

But, my Republican colleagues and I will stay on the side of the American people.

Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, it is good to see the Acting President pro tempore back in the Chair a second time.

NORTH KOREA

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, let me begin by addressing the administration's ongoing effort to secure a diplomatic deal with North Korea to achieve the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

It is a worthy and ambitious goal. Indeed, we should all root for a diplomatic resolution to the decades-long conflict. It is undeniable, however, that