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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.

Eternal Lord, marvelous is Your Name. We celebrate the works of Your hands: the sky and sea, the songs of birds, the hues of flowers, and the precision of the planets.

Bless the people of our beloved Republic. Amid all differences, may they be one in spirit, purpose, and faith.

Lord, continue to sustain our Senators. Keep them living, laboring, and loving for the good of all. Make them instruments of Your will for the healing of our Nation and world. Keep them conscious of Your presence and direct their thinking, speaking, and doing.

We pray in Your sacred 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 (Mrs. HYDE-SMITH). The majority leader is recognized.

NOMINATION OF MIKE POMPEO

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, yesterday the Foreign Relations Committee finished consideration of Mike Pompeo's nomination to serve as our Nation's 70th Secretary of State. They reported his nomination to the full Senate with a favorable recommendation. Later this week, we will take

their advice, and we will vote to confirm him.

We will be lucky to have this capable public servant on the job. We know Mike Pompeo is up to the task. After all, we confirmed him with a comfortable and bipartisan majority to lead the CIA. In one of the most sensitive positions in our government, the quality of his leadership was directly linked to the security of the American people.

West Point valedictorian, Harvard Law, U.S. Army officer, a successful businessman, and three-term Congressman serving on the House Intelligence Committee—this is the resume that Mike Pompeo brought to the top job at the CIA with the support of a bipartisan supermajority of the Senate, and, by all accounts, his tenure there has been a big success. The caliber of Mike's leadership and the quality of his counsel have won him the respect of our National Clandestine Service and the confidence of the President.

Just recently, Director Pompeo undertook sensitive conversations with representatives of North Korea to lay the groundwork for efforts aimed at denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula.

As he steps into this new mission as Secretary of State, he clearly enjoys the confidence of the President, and throughout his testimony before the Foreign Relations Committee, he demonstrated expertise and professionalism.

Fortunately, even as so many of President Trump's well-qualified nominees are obstructed and delayed without reason, a bipartisan majority of Senators have already signaled their intention to vote to confirm Mike Pompeo. We have the nominee, we have the votes, and we will confirm our next Secretary of State this week.

Then, I hope we can build on this bipartisan momentum and process more of the President's qualified nominees.

OPIOID EPIDEMIC

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, on another matter, our Nation's opioid epidemic continues to plague communities and families in my home State of Kentucky and across the Nation. Here in Congress, we are doing our best to support the healthcare and law enforcement professionals who are battling it every single day.

Last week, I introduced the Protecting Moms and Infants Act, a bipartisan effort to confront the heartbreaking cases of prenatal and infant opioid addiction. It builds on my 2015 bill, the Protecting Our Infants Act, and Congress's other recent progress on this issue.

In recent years, Congress has bolstered prevention, treatment, and enforcement efforts through the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act and the 21st Century Cures Act, and the recent government funding bill dedicated a record level of resources to saving lives from heroin and prescription drug abuse.

But much more work remains. So today I am proud to announce legislation to address this crisis' devastating effects on the American worker and the American workforce.

Stable employment is not just a path to financial security for workers and families. Earning a paycheck from a job is also linked to personal happiness and even physical health. We see firsthand in Kentucky the need for the structure and support that come with a job to help keep former addicts from falling back into the cycle of addiction. According to the CEO of a treatment facility in Louisville, "stable housing and employment are vitally tied to an individual's recovery." But, unfortunately, in the very communities where employment could do so much, the opioid crisis itself is making it harder to attain.

I frequently hear Kentucky employers cite substance abuse as a major hurdle to finding and hiring suitable

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



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applicants. One study traced roughly 25 percent of the decline in workforce participation between 1999 and 2015 to the opioid crisis. That amounts to about 1 million missing workers. It is no wonder that the Trump administration reports that the epidemic cost our economy a half trillion dollars in 2015 alone.

The economic cost pales in comparison to the human cost that addiction and joblessness inflict. The Comprehensive Addiction Recovery through Effective Employment and Reentry Act, or CAREER Act, would bring targeted relief to the States most devastated by substance abuse. This State-based pilot program would encourage local businesses and treatment groups to form partnerships to help those in recovery find and maintain employment.

The legislation expands housing block grants to encourage more transitional housing options for recovering addicts until they secure permanent arrangements. It gives States more flexibility to spend Federal career services and training funds to support specific initiatives dedicated to helping individuals transition from treatment to the workforce. In short, this bill does exactly what the experts tell us needs to be done on this front.

This morning, Chairman ALEXANDER and the HELP Committee are reviewing comprehensive opioid legislation. I commend the chairman for his diligent efforts on this subject. It is my hope that the committee will choose to include some of the proposals in the Protecting Moms and Infants Act and the CAREER Act in the larger package that they are developing.

This epidemic requires our continued attention. On behalf of those in Kentucky and all over the country who are struggling, we are determined to keep doing our part.

TAX REFORM

Mr. McCONNELL. Now, Madam President, on one final matter, the passage of Republicans' historic tax reform last December was just the latest illustration of the diverging paths Republicans and Democrats envision for our economy.

For the better part of the last decade, our Democratic colleagues' ideas ran their course. We were promised that they would help us recover from the financial crisis. But it wasn't a recovery for all Americans. In fact, the path put forward by our Democratic colleagues had two distinct lanes. The express lane was for major cities like New York and San Francisco. Urban areas with more than 1 million residents captured 90 percent of the Nation's population growth and nearly 75 percent of new jobs created between 2010 and 2016. Seventy-five percent of new jobs created between 2010 and 2016 went to these large urban areas.

Those select communities actually made up some ground, but working

families and job creators in America's smaller cities, towns, and rural communities were stuck in the slow lane. There, job opportunities dried up as investment dollars hit the road. There, Americans learned what it feels like when Washington, DC, leaves you behind. But, fortunately, these communities are among the first to feel the benefits of the new Republican approach.

The historic tax relief we passed last year cut taxes for American families and gave employers more flexibility to expand, hire, and give their workers bonuses, raises, and new benefits.

As my colleague Senator YOUNG reports, the results in Indiana are adding up. He heard from a Hoosier in Cedar Lake who is expanding his family milk-hauling business, and a Kokomo small business owner who is now hiring more workers. I recently read that over in Ellettsville, one family has found an additional \$200 in their monthly paychecks—enough to cover a week's worth of groceries.

I don't think my colleagues across the aisle intended to make life more difficult for middle-class families across the country. It is just that these leftwing policies make it harder, not easier, for American workers and job creators to actually get ahead. But when my Democratic friends had the chance to join us and deliver historic tax relief to American families, they stood firm and tried to block tax relief on a party-line basis. One of Indiana's own Senators tried to block all that good Indiana news from happening.

I am proud that Republicans overcame that obstruction and got tax reform accomplished for all Americans.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Stuart Kyle Duncan, of Louisiana, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Fifth Circuit.

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

NOMINATION OF MIKE POMPEO

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, yesterday, after some drama and a rare act of civility on the part of Senator COONS, for which I applaud him, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee approved the nomination of Mike Pompeo as Secretary of State. This is despite Chairman CORKER repeatedly pointing out how qualified for this appointment Director Pompeo actually is, but, apparently, it fell on deaf ears.

This sort of treatment is unprecedented, in my memory certainly, for a Secretary of State. Director Pompeo was, in fact, first in his class at West Point and led the Harvard Law Review. He served his country in the military and served the people of Kansas in Congress, not to mention the fact that Mike Pompeo already serves in one of the most sensitive and important positions in the Trump administration as Director of the Central Intelligence Agency.

I spoke yesterday about the confirmations of some of the most recent Secretaries of State, not just Secretaries Clinton and Kerry. Secretary Kerry got all but three votes in the Senate, and Secretary Clinton lost only two votes in the Senate, but I also spoke of Secretary Powell and Secretary Rice. All were confirmed overwhelmingly because the Senate has always had a tradition, until now, of showing some deference to the President when confirming nominees to positions like this that have national security importance. The world needs to know that this President has confidence in this nominee, and he does. That is the key to his effectiveness in international diplomacy—knowing he has the President's ear.

Our Democratic friends once upon a time acknowledged that, in the words of the senior Senator from Delaware:

The President, regardless of what party they are from, needs, for the most part, to have the team they want to put in place. They have been elected to lead. Let's give them a chance to lead.

The opposition we are seeing breaks with this longstanding tradition in a shameful and partisan way. Of course, our Democratic colleagues have been slow-walking and obstructing qualified nominees since the President was sworn in, just to hinder progress for hindering progress's sake alone. This is the kind of hyperpartisan approach to foreign policy that threatens to harm our national security because this is an important national security post. Not only should we confirm Mr. Pompeo so the President can have the support of his full Cabinet, but also so the American people can have the assurance that our national security is not being treated like a pinata that our Democratic colleagues are whacking with a stick.