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Senate

The Senate met at 12 noon 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 Father, strong to save, whose arm has bound the restless wave, we honor Your Name. Forgive us our sins and deliver us from evil. We thank You for food, drink, clothing, friends, and family.

Today, give our lawmakers faith to meet every challenge, courage to live by Your precepts, and humility to serve others in these grand and critical times. May a high sense of patriotism reinforce the commitment of our Senators to integrity, as they remember their accountability to You.

And, Lord, we thank You for the life and contributions of Matthew Pollard, who worked on the Intelligence Committee.

We pray in Your merciful 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.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. ERNST). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

The Senator from Mississippi.

NOMINATION OF MIKE POMPEO

Mr. WICKER. Madam President, I rise in strong support of the nomination of Mike Pompeo, our current CIA Director, to be the next Secretary of

State. I must say, I watched with interest the proceedings the day before yesterday in the Foreign Relations Committee. The debate was interesting on both sides. I appreciate the fact that accommodations were made so Mike Pompeo's nomination could be presented to the full Senate with a positive vote.

I am disappointed that so many of my Democratic colleagues have stated they will oppose this nomination. I heed the admonition of one of the Members of the Democratic Party at the confirmation vote before the committee when this Member asked that Senators not question the motives of anyone who takes a position one way or the other with regard to the nomination of Mr. Pompeo. I will heed that admonition and not question the motivation of any Senator who votes either yes or no on this nomination.

I will simply observe this: Mike Pompeo is a highly qualified nominee, a distinguished former Member of the House of Representatives. He served with accomplishment and great dignity and ability as Director of the CIA. He graduated first in his class from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and went on to graduate with distinction at the Harvard Law School and served as editor-in-chief of the Harvard Law Review.

This is a man of great intellect, a man of great ability and great accomplishment. Without impugning the motives of anyone who would vote no, I simply observe they will be voting against a highly accomplished and qualified nominee.

When the shoe was on the other foot during the Obama administration, I—along with almost a unanimous majority of Members of my caucus—voted yes, in favor of the confirmation of Hillary Clinton to be Secretary of State. I voted yes—again, a virtually unanimous vote on both sides of the aisle—for the nomination of our colleague John Kerry to be the successor to Hillary Clinton as Secretary of State.

I will simply note to my doubting friends, who are standing on their rights on the other side of the aisle, that the overwhelming weight of public opinion from the news media has come down on the side of Mr. Pompeo. The Wall Street Journal headline says we need a Secretary of State and that Mike Pompeo should be confirmed. The Chicago Tribune, in an editorial, states why the Senate should confirm Mike Pompeo. The Washington Post headline on the editorial page proclaims: "Confirm Mike Pompeo." The New York Daily News says: "Confirm Mike Pompeo: President Trump Needs a Secretary of State."

I will add, this country needs a Secretary of State. The cause of international diplomacy needs a Secretary of State. The cause of human rights around the world needs a Secretary of State.

USA Today: "Confirm Mike Pompeo to Fill the Void at State."

I will not question the motives of any of my colleagues, my friends whom I respect. I will only say, things are surely different around the U.S. Senate nowadays than they were previously, when we rose up almost unanimously and confirmed John Kerry and Hillary Clinton and stood for the proposition that a President of the United States is entitled to his or her team and that person needed strong support.

I only say that at a moment when our country needs to send a strong message of resolve to our allies and to the entire international community, we need to send a strong signal of unity; that the vote we may take later this week in confirming Mike Pompeo might send a signal of excessive partisanship and division, I regret that.

We are going to have a great Secretary of State at the end of this process. I think this, unfortunately, narrow vote will come and go and perhaps not be the standard we operate under in future times. I will only say that for those colleagues who are still looking

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



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for an answer and still wrestling with how they should vote, I commend to them the example of previous days and the example of sending a strong signal around the globe that this President is supported in his efforts in international diplomacy and that he is entitled to the team he has chosen.

I urge my colleagues to vote yes. I appreciate the distinguished minority leader for indulging me and allowing me to go forward.

I yield the floor.

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 Mike Pompeo, of Kansas, to be Secretary of State.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

WELCOMING THE PRESIDENT OF FRANCE

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, before I begin, I want to welcome the President of France, Emmanuel Macron, who just finished his address before a joint meeting of Congress. His words were timely, particularly his admonition to reject false idols of our time: isolationism, cynicism. He argued that if we were to advance principles upon which both our Nations were founded—as he would say, “liberte, egalite, and fraternite”—he would say it better than I, of course—and secure the prosperity and security of our peoples in the future, we must seek further cooperation with our allies and engagement with the world. I hope everyone at both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue takes President Macron’s words to heart.

Madam President, the Senate is considering the nomination of Mike Pompeo to be the next Secretary of State. I must admit that even after his confirmation to the directorship of the CIA, I remained concerned about Mr. Pompeo when he was in the Congress. I talked to him directly. I told him how deeply disappointed I was in how he handled the Benghazi hearings, how partisan they were. I told him some of his comments about minority groups—Muslims in particular—were way over the top. Over the course of his tenure at Langley, I met with him several times after that first meeting where I had given him my views on some of the things I disagreed with in what he did.

I have to say, those meetings were good meetings. He was very candid

with me. He is obviously very smart. He is obviously well informed about foreign policy—far more well informed than Secretary Tillerson was when he came to visit me before his nomination hearing. In particular, what gave me some good feeling was that Mr. Pompeo was particularly strong on Russia sanctions, even showing some separation from the President as we met. I began to think Mr. Pompeo was better than my first impression, which has been guided particularly by his very poor performance in the Benghazi hearings. Then, he was nominated for Secretary of State. That is a whole different ball game. Anyone nominated for such a critical security position deserves the most careful and thoughtful scrutiny.

With that in mind, I met with Mr. Pompeo privately, where I interviewed him on foreign policy. Frankly, on many issues, our views were not the same. He was far more hawkish than I prefer our diplomat to be. Frankly, my views were probably, on this issue, a little closer to the President’s, who remembered, as I do, that in Iraq, we spent over \$1 trillion and lost close to 5,000 of our bravest young men and women, and Iraq doesn’t seem much better off today than it was then.

My view was that he was too quick to recommend strong military action when diplomacy might do. At the same time, I believe the President should get to pick his team. President Trump wanted a more hawkish Secretary of State—it would be concerning to me, but it is his decision—and Mr. Pompeo answered my questions with the same candor and forthrightness as in our previous meetings.

I thought I would wait for his hearing—because speaking in public is different than speaking privately to a Member of the Senate—before making the decision. At Mr. Pompeo’s hearing, I became very disappointed. First, the President has shown in word and deed that he often directs foreign policy by impulse—erratically, inconsistently. The fact that we are contending with several hotspots in the world—North Korea, Iran, Syria, Yemen, Venezuela, and Russia—means we need someone in the State Department who not only prizes the value of diplomacy but is willing to check the President’s worst instincts. Unfortunately, Mr. Pompeo’s testimony—and, of course, public testimony is the real test—did little to convince me that he would be a strong tempering influence on an often erratic President. He didn’t convince me that he would be the kind of Secretary who most of us believe Secretary Mattis is, who is able, successfully, to check the President when the President may go off base. Even more disappointing was Mr. Pompeo’s tepid responses to questions about his commitment to bedrock principles such as rule of law.

As important and difficult as our foreign policy decisions are, the Nation is facing a great test. The President seems to tempt rule of law in America when it comes to the investigation of

whether there was collusion between his administration, his campaign, and Russia. An investigation to look into this—to look into Russian interference in our elections and whether there was participation of the President or members of his campaign or administration—is vital to the bedrock of America. Even worse is if a President says: I can undo this investigation one way or another; I can thwart it.

He is already trying to intimidate it, but fortunately Mr. Mueller is not the type who is intimidated, and Mr. Rosenstein does not seem to be either. These questions were crucial. A key position like Secretary of State should be able to speak out on this kind of issue because America is recognized throughout the world as the country that most prizes rule of law. If our Secretary doesn’t speak out strongly against this, it is not only bad for our country but not good for his ability to do his job around the world. Unfortunately, I was deeply disappointed.

Mr. Pompeo responded, when put to this question as to whether he would stand up to the President, whether he would resign or otherwise protest the President’s actions that would undermine the rule of law—his answers were weak. He did not say he would resign if the President fired Mueller or Rosenstein. To me, a Cabinet officer should do that. He did not even unequivocally state that he would publicly urge the President not to fire Mr. Mueller. That was not good enough, but I thought I again owed Mr. Pompeo a direct discussion because he is a talented man, and the President does deserve the benefit of the doubt.

So I called him into my office for one private meeting, one final meeting. I asked him pointedly whether he would be able to simply say publicly, before we voted on him, that the President shouldn’t fire Special Counsel Mueller. I asked him what he would do if the President fired the special counsel or Mr. Rosenstein. His answers were extremely insufficient. I also asked him if he would be willing to recant or undo some of what he had said about Muslims, Indian Americans, LGBTQ Americans, and women’s rights now that he was in line to be our Secretary of State and had to deal with countries that might be affected by his remarks. Again, he demurred. When he left that meeting, I emerged with a clear conscience in that a vote against Mr. Pompeo’s nomination was the right thing to do.

I still believe a President deserves his team and that disagreements on policy alone are not sufficient reasons to reject a nomination, but I gave Mr. Pompeo the benefit of the doubt and three chances to answer the questions I thought were extremely important to assuage my broader concerns about his nomination. He did not answer those questions in any way that was satisfying. So, with a clear conscience, I will be voting against his nomination.

Let me be clear. This is not about politics. This is not about denying the