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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 Spirit, our strength in times of weakness, give us the power of purpose to do justly and to love mercy. Save our lawmakers from self-interest and pride, making them servants of Your will in challenging times. Lord, give them delight in Your guidance, enabling them to receive the blessings of the bountiful harvest that comes from living with integrity. Teach them to serve You with reverential awe, as they find refuge by abiding in Your presence. Thank you, this day, for the abundance of Your steadfast love.

We pray in Your great 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 (Mr. SASSE). The majority leader is recognized.

### RELEASE OF AMERICAN PRISONERS IN NORTH KOREA AND NOMINATION OF GINA HASPEL

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, this morning the world has learned that Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is on his way back from North Korea with three American prisoners after securing their release. Two were detained last year. One had been in captivity

since 2015. Following successful discussions, all three are on their way back to the United States with our Secretary of State.

I am hopeful that by approaching our ongoing negotiations with clear eyes, we can build on this progress and pursue a verifiable agreement to dismantle North Korea's nuclear arms. The United States faces a number of threats around the world—from the ambitions of dissatisfied powers such as Iran, China, and Russia to terrorism, cyber attacks, and the proliferation of missiles. In every instance, we need valuable foreign intelligence to inform policymakers and help us protect the American people.

As we speak, our colleagues on the Intelligence Committee are hearing from one of President Trump's nominees to help us confront these challenges. Gina Haspel is a tremendous choice to lead the Central Intelligence Agency. She will bring more direct, hard-earned experience to the role of CIA Director than any leader in the Agency's history. Ms. Haspel is eminently qualified. She is widely esteemed. She is absolutely the right person at the right moment for this position.

First, there are her ample qualifications. Raised in a military family, Ms. Haspel had her sights set on attending West Point until she found out that women were not yet allowed to attend. It was the Army's loss, but my own alma mater, the University of Louisville, was happy to have her. With a knack for foreign languages and a drive "to be part of something bigger than just me," she joined the CIA in 1985.

As a talented clandestine operations officer, Gina Haspel took on a variety of challenging assignments and rose through the ranks. She earned the George H.W. Bush Award for Excellence in Counterterrorism and eventually transferred to the CIA's Counterterrorism Center. Her first day in that role was September 11, 2001.

After this 33-year career, Ms. Haspel will not have to wonder what life is like for the men and women she will be leading. From clandestine missions overseas to the headquarters at Langley, she has lived it herself. It is not surprising that Ms. Haspel has received so much praise from across the political spectrum, including from those who have led the Agency before her. President Obama's former Director, John Brennan, calls her "an exceptionally well-respected professional."

President Bush's former Director, General Michael Hayden, said this: "Her only goal is to live out the agency's mission. . . . [S]he is a wonderful choice."

In a letter to our colleagues on the Intelligence Committee, a bipartisan group of 53 former national security leaders said her qualifications "match or exceed those of most candidates put forward in the Agency's 70-year history."

So Ms. Haspel's skill set is impressive, and it is an ideal match for the very strategic challenges that currently face our country. As Secretary Mattis made clear in his new National Defense Strategy, our Nation must be prepared for a new era of competition between powerful nations. "We'll continue to prosecute the campaign against terrorists," he explained a few months ago, "but great-power competition . . . is now the primary focus of U.S. national security."

Ms. Haspel is the perfect candidate to lead the Central Intelligence Agency through both these challenges. Her lengthy and distinguished CIA service spans both the Cold War and the Global War on Terror. As a result, she has firsthand experience gathering foreign intelligence in an era of great-power competition and hard-won expertise in counterterrorism operations and analysis.

In short, her résumé could hardly be better tailored for the specific challenges that our Nation faces at this

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



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very moment. As CIA Director, Gina Haspel would help defend the homeland from terrorists and help secure America's position on the world stage.

This excellent nominee possesses the résumé, the reputation, and the unique skill set to lead the CIA at this critical juncture. I am glad that my colleagues on the Senate Intelligence Committee have the opportunity to meet with her and thoroughly examine her credentials. I look forward to voting to confirm her soon here on the Senate floor.

#### JUDICIAL NOMINATIONS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, on another matter, this week the Senate is in the midst of processing six—six—well qualified nominees for the Federal bench. We have voted to invoke cloture on the nomination of Judge Kurt Engelhardt, and today we will vote to confirm him.

Given his impressive qualifications, Judge Engelhardt's arrival on the bench will not come a moment too soon. Lawyers have described him as "a wonderful judge" with "excellent legal ability" who is "very thoughtful and analytical." One said: "[H]e would be great on the Fifth Circuit."

After Judge Engelhardt, we will vote to advance the nomination of Michael Brennan of Wisconsin, another nominee who has earned the ABA's highest rating of unanimously—unanimously—"well qualified." Each nominee on the slate has been vetted by the Judiciary Committee, and each stands ready to serve as a diligent caretaker of the rule of law. Considering and confirming judicial nominations is one of the most important functions of the Senate. We will keep taking care of the people's business.

#### TRIBUTE TO DR. JAMES KLOTTER

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, on one final matter, I wish to recognize a distinguished Kentuckian this morning: our longtime State historian, Dr. James Klotter. At the end of this semester, Jim will depart Georgetown College in Scott County, KY, for a well-earned retirement. Jim is a Kentucky native who has dedicated his entire professional life to preserving and appreciating the Commonwealth's history. He earned his Ph.D. from the University of Kentucky and set out to examine a wide range of topics throughout our State's history.

As an author, coauthor, or editor, Jim has completed about 20 books, some of them with his wife and frequent collaborator Freda. He has worked to make Kentucky history accessible to students and readers of all ages. To quote Jim and his self-deprecating humor, "Students can now be sick of Klotter at any level."

Jim's scholarship has won local, State, and even international recognition. In 2016, the University of Kentucky Libraries honored him with the Medallion of Intellectual Achievement.

On a personal note, I owe Jim a debt of thanks for all of his help as I prepared a series of historical speeches focusing on U.S. Senators from Kentucky. I recently finished the final speech in the series, and I couldn't have done it without Jim and his endless expertise.

Although Jim will soon retire from teaching, he will continue his research, his writing, and his service as State historian. I wish him well and look forward to all the great work that I am confident is yet to come.

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

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

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

#### TEACHER APPRECIATION WEEK

Mr. SCHUMER. Thank you, Mr. President.

First, I want to spend a moment in recognition of Teacher Appreciation Week. I am sure everyone here remembers a teacher who inspired them, challenged them, and propelled them to greater heights. I will never forget Mrs. Roberts, the Cunningham Junior High School teacher who opened my eyes up to science; Mrs. Riley, who inspired a love of literature; and I will never forget Mrs. Wagman, who kindled my interests in government and politics, an interest that never died.

That is what great teachers do. They open doors previously thought closed. They work day and night to give every one of us the opportunity to succeed. What a noble calling.

In my view, teaching in the 21st century should be the same kind of exalted profession as law or medicine was in the 20th century. It is such an important job, in terms of our future, our economy—competing with China. The education of our young people is No. 1. Often around here we forget that, and in many of the States they have forgotten it.

Teachers enjoy their jobs. They make huge financial sacrifices. Many of them could make much more money in another profession. So I think we should appreciate teachers, not only in thanking them—I thanked three who changed my life, and there are many more—but we should thank them by rewarding them financially because it is such an important profession.

#### RELEASE OF AMERICAN HOSTAGES IN NORTH KOREA

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, secondly, I would like to address the news

this morning that Secretary of State Pompeo will be returning from North Korea with the three Americans who were held there against their will. We are all glad to see them returning home. Their families are delighted. We are all delighted.

Let's not forget, this is not some great give on North Korea's part. We cannot forget that no regime has the right to hold American citizens in captivity without cause. Under no circumstances should American citizens be viewed as bargaining chips by foreign capitals. I hope President Trump and Secretary Pompeo are clear about that because the same goes for other countries wrongly detaining Americans—Iran, China. If countries in the world think they can detain Americans and get something in return, we will see many more hostages.

So we are all rooting for the diplomacy with North Korea to succeed and, in that respect, I urge the Trump administration to work with our allies with a coordinated and considered strategy to see if we can denuclearize the Korean Peninsula, but the hostages shouldn't be part of it. We are happy they have returned, but North Korea shouldn't gain by taking Americans and then releasing them.

#### NOMINATION OF MICHAEL BRENNAN

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, in a few hours, the Senate will vote to proceed to the nomination of Michael Brennan to the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals.

Mr. Brennan has not received a blue slip—that is a notice of approval that has been a tradition in the Senate—from one of his home State Senators, Ms. BALDWIN. So the vote today will be a slap in the face to the custom of senatorial courtesy. It will be a slap in the face to the bipartisanship we hear so many on the other side of the aisle and so many more Americans talk about. It is blatant disrespect to every Senator who wants to withhold his or her judgment on a judge, a tradition that has been respected by Democrats and Republicans until Leader MCCONNELL abruptly changed this earlier this year for circuit court judges.

What makes this even more galling is the history of this vacancy on the Seventh Circuit. Mr. Brennan will fill the seat that had been held open by Wisconsin's other Senator for 6 years during the Obama administration. Well, how was Senator JOHNSON able to withhold? He didn't return his blue slip, and Senator LEAHY, the Democratic chair, respected it. The same should prove true for Senator BALDWIN. She should get the same respect from Senator MCCONNELL and Chairman GRASSLEY that Senator JOHNSON got for this same seat from then-Leader Reid and Senator LEAHY, the chairman of the Judiciary Committee, but, no, our Republican colleagues keep changing the rules.