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Senate

The Senate met at 11 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.

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on us. As the clock ticks toward another deadline, inspire our lawmakers to be instruments of Your purposes. May they humbly seek to do what is best for our Nation and world, achieving together what cannot be done without allies.

Lord, give them the wisdom to see that there is a practical morality based on absolutes that they should follow. Remind them that they are accountable to You for their thoughts, words, and deeds. May they speak truth as You give them the ability to comprehend it, finding workable solutions to challenging problems.

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 (Mrs. CAPITO). The majority leader is recognized.

FUNDING THE GOVERNMENT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, the deadline to fund the government is nearly upon us. The Senate is now just hours away from an entirely avoidable government shutdown. At midnight tonight, funding for programs that mil-

lions of Americans rely on—veterans services, opioid treatment centers, death benefits for the families of fallen soldiers, and health insurance for 9 million vulnerable children—would be thrown into chaos.

Last night the Senate began consideration of a bill passed by the House that would erase all of these threats. The bill keeps the Federal Government open. It extends the State Children's Health Insurance Program, which provides coverage for 9 million children and low-income families for 6 years. This vote should be a no-brainer, and it would be, except that the Democratic leader has convinced his Members to filibuster any funding bill that doesn't include legislation they are demanding for people who came into the United States illegally. What has been shoehorned into this discussion is an insistence that we deal with an illegal immigration issue.

He has insisted that he will not support any legislation at all for the American people no matter how non-controversial or how bipartisan unless we pass a bill on illegal immigration first. If that means shutting down the funding for veterans, military families, opioid treatment centers, and even Federal grants to his home State of New York, so be it. If it means throwing a wrench into the gears of the U.S. economy, just as Americans are starting to feel the benefits of historic tax reform, so be it. If it means failing to renew the Children's Health Insurance Program, which the House-passed bill funded for a full 6 years, apparently that is just fine with those on the other side.

Nearly every Democrat in the House made the same demand. That has been their stated position: Nothing for hundreds of millions of Americans and no healthcare for 9 million vulnerable children until we solve a non-imminent issue related to illegal immigration. To even repeat this position out loud is to see how completely ridiculous it is.

Now that we are 13 hours away from a government shutdown that the Democrats would initiate and Democrats would own, the craziness of this seems to be dawning on my friend the Democratic leader. Perhaps he is remembering his own words from 2013. Here is what he said back then about threatening a government shutdown.

No matter how strongly one feels about an issue, you shouldn't hold millions of people hostage . . . that's wrong.

A few days later, the Democratic leader added:

It's sort of like this. Someone goes into your house, takes your wife and children hostage, and then says, "Let's negotiate over the price of your house."

He went on to say.

We're shutting down the government, we're not gonna raise the debt ceiling until you pass immigration reform. It would be governmental chaos.

Now maybe he is remembering those words today because now he is saying: Never mind, I really didn't mean it, and he himself is calling for an even shorter short-term funding bill. Of course, his last-ditch proposals would do nothing for the Children's Health Insurance Program or the 9 million children who are waiting on us to renew it. What is more, the incredibly short-term continuing resolutions he is now proposing do not meet any of the demands—none of them—that he and his own conference and Democrats in the House have been making for weeks. None of that would be solved in a short-term CR—the stuff they have been calling for.

So apparently now he wants his Members to default on their own demands. He has spent days apparently persuading all of his colleagues to insist that we cannot pass another continuing resolution. Now he wants them to pass one. He spent weeks getting his Members to proclaim that we should not do anything to fund the government unless we address the DACA issue, and now apparently he is calling

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



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on them to do just that. These incredibly short-term extensions would not even give us enough time to actually write the legislation the Democratic leader is demanding. One extremely short-term CR would lead to another and another—exactly the outcome Democrats have declared they cannot accept.

Now, I wish for all of our sakes that the Democratic leader would figure out what he actually wants. I feel bad for his own Members. He has painted them into a corner, but I especially feel bad for the American people whose government the Democrats are threatening to shut down and the 9 million children whose health insurance could be thrown into jeopardy because Senate Democrats cannot get their story straight.

Now, my friend the Democratic leader now wants his Members to pass a bill that allows SCHIP to expire. Apparently, he now wants every Democrat in the House of Representatives to break their word and pass a separate funding bill of his own that does not address the illegal immigration issue they said they must have. So let's think about this for a minute. First, he leads his own troops into a box canyon, and then tells them it was really all for nothing. Maybe it is time to come back to reality.

We already have a bill that we know can pass the House because it already did. We have a bill that we know the President will sign into law because he has already committed to do just that. We know that with one noncontroversial and bipartisan vote we can keep the government up and running. We can fund the children's healthcare program for 6 years, and we can give ourselves the time we need to finish ongoing negotiations on DACA, border security, and the long-term needs of our military. We could do all of that today—all of it—or our Democratic friends can continue to take the Democratic leader's advice and vote to shut down the government, destabilize funding for our troops, shut down the children's healthcare program, and still not get what they are demanding on illegal immigration. It is really up to them.

I look forward to voting soon on cloture on the House bill. The American people, the citizens who actually elected us, will be watching. They will see which Senators make the patriotic decision to stand up for the American people and vote to continue government funding and extend children's healthcare while we continue our bipartisan talks, and they will see which Senators vote to shove aside veterans, military families, and vulnerable children and to hold the entire country hostage until we pass an immigration bill they haven't even written yet.

It is completely unfair and uncompassionate for my Democratic colleagues to filibuster government funding, harm our troops, and jeopardize health coverage for 9 million

children because extreme elements of their base want illegal immigration to crowd out every other priority. Apparently, they believe the issue of illegal immigration is more important than everything else—all the government services the American people depend on.

I would recommend to stop the wild-goose chase. Don't go to a destination that cannot be explained. Let's fulfill the core responsibilities of Congress. Let's fund the government, provide for the American people, and then resume serious negotiations on the issues that matter most. Let's fund the government for a full month so we can actually get something done.

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.

FEDERAL REGISTER PRINTING SAVINGS ACT OF 2017

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to concur in the House amendment to the Senate amendment to H.R. 195, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

House message to accompany H.R. 195, a bill to amend title 44, United States Code, to restrict the distribution of free printed copies of the Federal Register to Members of Congress and other officers and employees of the United States, and for other purposes.

Pending:

McConnell motion to concur in the amendment of the House to the amendment of the Senate to the bill.

McConnell motion to concur in the amendment of the House to the amendment of the Senate to the bill, with McConnell amendment No. 1903 (to the House amendment to the Senate amendment to the bill), to change the enactment date.

McConnell amendment No. 1904 (to amendment No. 1903), of a perfecting nature.

McConnell motion to refer the message of the House on the bill to the Committee on Appropriations, with instructions, McConnell amendment No. 1905, to change the enactment date.

McConnell amendment No. 1906 (to (the instructions) amendment No. 1905), of a perfecting nature.

McConnell amendment No. 1907 (to amendment No. 1906), of a perfecting nature.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic whip.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, let's look at the reality of what we face at this moment in this country in this Chamber. The Republicans are in majority control of the Senate. The Republicans are in majority control of the House of Representatives. The Republicans are in control of the White

House. The Republicans, through their appointees, have a pretty decisive edge when it comes to the U.S. Supreme Court. In other words, when you look across the spectrum of the three branches of government, the Republicans are in control.

What are they offering us? The fourth CR. Now, CR is Washington talk. It is a continuing resolution. What does it mean? It means that the Republican majority has failed in 119 days to produce a budget for the United States of America. The Republican majority in the House and Senate—with their President—has failed to come up with a blueprint for spending for this great Nation that we serve and are proud to be part of.

Their fourth failure to produce a budget in this fiscal year, which began October 1, is before us now. Was it negotiated between the Republicans and Democrats? No. It was produced in the House of Representatives and with the Senate. It was passed there by the Republicans and a handful of Democrats who supported it, and it was sent over here on a take-it-or-leave-it basis.

Well, you say, at least we are going to keep the lights on. And that is all a continuing resolution does—keeps the lights on. It doesn't allow agencies to make important decisions that invest taxpayers' dollars wisely and save taxpayers' dollars.

Last night, the Department of Defense reported to us. They are sick and tired of the continuing resolutions that they have faced for 3 years—note that I said 3 years—because we have failed, even on the Democratic side, to come up with appropriations and budgets in the past. So I am being very honest about it.

If we are going to change this mentality of never producing a budget, never producing appropriations bills—kind of stumbling into the fiscal year for month after weary month—if that is the new norm around here, shame on us. And shame on the majority party, the Republicans, for saying that is the best they can do. We can do better.

We need to get beyond this world of continuing resolutions, and we need to get into a world where we actually make a decision that is good for the taxpayers, as well as the security of the United States of America. The best the Republican leader in the Senate can offer us is another bandaid, another 4 weeks of temporary funding—a wasteful gesture, a wasteful exercise, and he knows it.

There is more to this issue. Senator MCCONNELL brings it up regularly. Last night he did and again today. He glories in saying that this is all about illegal immigrants. Let's be honest about what we are talking about here. We are talking about those who were protected and allowed to live in the United States legally under an Executive order of President Obama's until September 5 of last year when President