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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable RAND PAUL, a Senator from the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Loving and Ever-Present God, we thank You for being our helper in the present and our hope for the future. We trust You to direct our steps with Your providential power. Forgive our slowness to understand and our haste to question Your purposes.

Lord, guide our lawmakers. Where there is perplexity, provide clarity. Where there is sickness, bring healing. Where there is doubt, give faith. Where there is despair, bestow hope. Hasten the day when the Earth will be filled with Your glory as the waters cover the sea.

We pray in Your loving 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).

The assistant bill clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, June 13, 2018.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable RAND PAUL, a Senator

from the Commonwealth of Kentucky, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ORRIN G. HATCH,

President pro tempore.

Mr. PAUL thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

FARM BILL

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, my colleagues and I on the Agriculture Committee will mark up the farm bill today. It is a landmark piece of legislation that will benefit farmers and communities throughout our country. I will have much more to say on the subject in the days and weeks ahead, particularly when it arrives here on the floor.

I am particularly excited that the legislation being considered today includes provisions from the Hemp Farming Act of 2018, of which the occupant of the Chair is an original cosponsor and which I introduced earlier this year. This provision will empower farmers in Kentucky and other States to fully realize the potential of industrial hemp.

For now, I just want to thank Chairman ROBERTS for his leadership and congratulate him and all of our colleagues on the committee for their bipartisan collaboration and the impressive bill it has produced.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION BILL

Mr. MCCONNELL. On another matter, Mr. President, last week, Secretary of Defense Mattis met with our NATO allies in Brussels. He offered an important reminder: "Threats to our collective security have not waned." In

other words, it remains a challenging time to defend our Nation, our interests, and our values.

Secretary Mattis has been consistent. Our new national defense strategy makes this clear. Though we face a constant threat from international terrorism, our Nation must also enhance our capabilities for a renewed era of international competition among great powers.

He, along with our senior military commanders, have shared this message with Congress time and again. They have detailed our servicemembers' pressing needs and explained the importance of steady resources in the face of evolving threats. We have heard them loud and clear.

Earlier this year, our bipartisan spending agreement eliminated harmful, arbitrary limits on defense spending and delivered the largest year-on-year increase in funding for our military in 15 years. Now it is time to build on this progress and pass our 58th annual Defense authorization bill.

This year's NDAA is rightfully named for our friend and colleague JOHN MCCAIN. It would authorize \$716 billion to equip and train America's 21st century forces to meet and overcome today's challenges.

As the Iranian regime continues its aggressive efforts to expand its sphere of influence throughout the Middle East, this bill will empower our forces to support our strategic partnerships in the region.

As China continues testing the boundaries of its power in the Pacific region, the NDAA will extend the authority of the Indo-Pacific maritime security initiative and extend the reach and readiness of naval and air forces within the U.S. Pacific Command.

As Russia persists in its efforts to destabilize western democracies and sow doubt within NATO, the bill before us would enhance multilateral security

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



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cooperation throughout the alliance and give U.S. Cyber Command the resources to disrupt, deter, and defeat cyber aggression.

The legislation before us sends a clear message to our men and women in uniform. It tells them that we have their backs. After years of uncertain funding and arbitrary funding limits, we have their backs. In the face of diverse and evolving threats, we have their backs.

When I vote, I will do it to tell the brave Kentuckians serving at home and abroad that we have their backs. I hope that each of our colleagues will do the same.

This bill was crafted in a thorough, bipartisan committee process and was modified to include more than 40 amendments. I look forward to concluding our consideration and passing this NDAA very soon.

TAX REFORM

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, on another matter, there has been no shortage of recent reporting on the economic progress that is flooding across our country. Take a New York Times headline from earlier this month: “We Ran Out of Words to Describe How Good the Jobs Numbers Are.”

Let me say that again. This is from the New York Times: “We Ran Out of Words to Describe How Good the Jobs Numbers Are.”

This is from a Wall Street Journal editorial:

The U.S. economy is picking up speed, and it's paying dividends in an expanding job market. . . . President Trump's tax reform and deregulation agenda appears to be working.

And here is a welcome development for America's parents:

Workers age 25 to 34 made up 1.04 million of the 2.58 million jobs added over the last year. Job and wage growth may finally be inducing young people to move out of their parents' basements.

More jobs, more wage growth, more opportunities for middle-class Americans—it is good news, plain and simple.

Well, apparently, it is not so simple for our friends across the aisle. While Republicans and the rest of the country are cheering on this new prosperity for working families, our Democratic friends are trying to pretend that the facts don't matter and things aren't actually getting better.

Here is how the leader of the House Democrats, the distinguished Congresswoman from San Francisco, tried to sarcastically brush away the facts a few days ago:

Hip, hip, hooray, unemployment is down! What does that mean to me?

I couldn't make this up. “Hip, hip, hooray,” she scoffs. Unemployment is at an 18-year low, the fewest Americans on unemployment insurance since 1973, and Democratic leadership can't quite fathom why this would matter for American families and small busi-

ness owners. I know plenty of families and job creators in Kentucky who would be happy to explain.

Texas Roadhouse is a restaurant chain based in Louisville that employs more than 2,500 Kentuckians. They shared recently that tax reform will allow them to invest in their company, customers, and employees. Plus, this economic climate has them planning to open 30–30—new locations across the country next year. Maybe the new cooks and wait staff at 30 new restaurants could explain to the House Democratic leader why a falling unemployment rate is a victory for American families.

Just today, Glier's Meats in Covington, KY, is sharing similar good news. Tax reform is enabling this small business, famous for its German-inspired sausage, to make life better for its nearly 30 employees and plant deeper roots in Kenton County. Since the new law passed in December, Glier's has been able to make capital investments, including new machinery, which is critical to the daily operations of the business. They have been able to resume offering comprehensive health benefits, which it had to give up 6 years ago as costs soared under ObamaCare. They have been able to significantly increase employees' wages, and they are on track to hire five new workers in the coming months.

Our Kentucky State treasurer, Allison Ball, had it just right. She said in a recent column: “Kentuckians have immediately benefited from federal tax reform.”

These immediate benefits are only the beginning. More and more stories like these are being written all the time as tax reform, regulatory reform, and the rest of Republicans' opportunity agenda continue helping American workers and job creators.

There are transformative new equipment purchases for Main Street small businesses, pay raises for hard-working middle-class employees, and new job openings all over the country so that new workers who are just starting out have more opportunities, and midcareer professionals who have been on the sidelines have the opportunity to clock back in.

Unlike leading Democrats, apparently, Republicans don't need it explained to us why this news matters to workers and families. It is exactly what we hoped to achieve. It is exactly the result that our policies were meant to produce.

The distinction could not be more clear. On one side of the aisle are those who mock multithousand-dollar tax reform bonuses as “crumbs,” who can't grasp why an 18-year low in employment would matter to American families, and on the other side of the aisle are those of us who have helped make it happen.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—H.R. 5895

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I understand there is a bill at the desk that is due for a second reading.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The leader is correct.

The clerk will read the bill by title for the second time.

The assistant bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 5895) making appropriations for energy and water development and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2019, and for other purposes.

Mr. MCCONNELL. In order to place the bill on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I object to further proceedings.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection having been heard, the bill will be placed on the calendar.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. 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.

TRUMP-KIM SUMMIT

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I rise today briefly to thank President Trump. I want to thank him for our summit with North Korea in Singapore.

Only Nixon could go to China, and I think only Trump could go to North Korea. I understand that he went to Singapore, but you get the point. It is a beginning. It is a baby step, but it was an important step, and I want to thank President Trump for taking it.

Certainly, there is nothing in the history of Kim Jong Un or his father or his grandfather that would cause us to be optimistic. So I think the President and all Americans are entering into this discourse with eyes wide open.

We also know that Kim Jong Un is not coming to the table out of the goodness of his heart. President Trump and the U.S. Congress have hit him with sanctions, and we have hit him so hard that he is coughing up bones. I hate to do that to the people of North Korea, but we had no choice.

I think Kim Jong Un is coming to the table also because he understands that, for the first time in a long time, America means what it says and a military option is on the table. He saw what happened to Assad in Syria, not once but twice.

So we enter into this discourse with North Korea, as I said, with eyes wide open. An old comedian once said that sincerity is everything. Fake that, and you got it made.

Well, we don't know whether Kim Jong Un is sincere yet. We will probably find out when the President asks