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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 God, who has been the hope and joy of many generations, thank You for giving us the power to seek You. We praise You for Your promise that those who keep on seeking will find what they seek. Inspire our lawmakers to seek Your wisdom in order to be guided by Your loving providence.

Lord, give them a clearer vision of Your truth, a great faith in Your might, and a deeper assurance of Your love. Teach them to labor and not to ask for any reward except that of knowing they are doing Your will.

We pray in Your loving 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 (Mr. COTTON). 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 pro-

ceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Andrew S. Oldham, of Texas, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Fifth Circuit.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 2 p.m. will be equally divided in the usual form.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, this week the Senate continues to confirm impressive nominees whom President Trump has asked to serve our country. We have confirmed two Assistant Secretaries to the Department of Education, Scott Stump and James Blew. We have confirmed a member of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve, Randal Quarles. Now we will turn to the judiciary and consider nominees to the Fifth Circuit and Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals.

First is Andrew Oldham of Texas, the President's choice for the Fifth Circuit. Mr. Oldham has impressed the legal community in his years of public service, most recently as general counsel to the Governor of Texas.

Mr. Oldham has degrees from the University of Virginia, Cambridge, and Harvard Law. He clerked on both the DC Circuit Court and the Supreme Court. He carries the highest possible rating from the American Bar Association, "unanimously well-qualified."

He comes highly recommended by peers and colleagues from across the political spectrum. Judith Zaffirini is a Texas State senator. She is a Democrat. She wrote the Judiciary Committee to support Mr. Oldham's nomination "confidently, enthusiastically, and without reservation." She and the nominee have worked together on a number of important subjects. Through them all, she explains, "Mr. Oldham reflected the ideal qualities of a judge . . . open-minded, fair . . . thoughtful and analytical."

Lisa Blatt is a skilled litigator who argues frequently before the Supreme Court. She is also a Democrat. She wrote the committee too. Her letter describes Mr. Oldham as "a great listener" with "a brilliant legal mind, [and] a wonderful sense of humor and collegiality."

Her conclusion? He would "make a superb judge."

What about Mr. Oldham's own words? If confirmed, he explained to our colleagues during his hearing, he will "uphold the rights of all litigants—big or little—equally, and apply the law to all fairly."

He understands his responsibility, clearly. I look forward to confirming this nominee, and I urge each of our colleagues to join me.

#### ECONOMIC GROWTH

Mr. President, on another matter, it has been a year and a half since Republican majorities took their seats in Congress and a Republican President was sworn in. In 2016, the American people made it clear it was time to try something new. They were tired of a so-called recovery that focused overwhelmingly on big, wealthy metropolitan areas. They had seen enough of tax hikes and top-down regulations that held their communities back. They turned to Republicans to deliver a pro-growth, pro-opportunity agenda to create better conditions for working families, job creators, and entrepreneurs to rise together.

Eighteen months later, the results could not be clearer. Today, more people say it is a good time to find a job than at almost any point since the turn of the millennium. U.S. manufacturers are more confident than ever about the future of their businesses.

Here is a story from yesterday's Financial Times: "US retail sales rise for fifth straight month in June." This is a good sign for Americans all across the board. It shows our economy is healthy. It shows that families feel they have enough breathing room to

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



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make purchases, which of course then benefit the companies and workers who produce what they are buying. Of course, it is especially good for the 42 million Americans whose jobs are supported by the retail industry.

According to industry data, more than 6 in 10 Americans work in retail at some point in their career, so this continued prosperity is really significant. There is little question that tax reform is to thank for a significant portion of this progress.

For one thing, our middle-class tax cuts are directly boosting families' discretionary income. As the Wall Street Journal reported this week, "many households are experiencing less withholding from their paychecks thanks to the tax overhaul."

Analysts also point to the business side of tax reform, which is letting more U.S. employers expand and hire. That means more jobs for American workers, which means more income for American families, which means more money in the cash registers of American small businesses. The virtuous cycle goes on.

The American people and most fair observers are marveling at what our economy is delivering to workers and middle-class families, but I am starting to think our Democratic colleagues may have forgotten what a successful economic agenda looks like because even in the face of headline after headline and testimony after testimony from job creators we represent, they try to brush off this impressive growth as nothing serious, and they advocate for repealing or undoing the Republican policies that are helping to make it happen.

Fortunately, Republicans know full well how to cut taxes, trim back regulations, and get Washington out of the American people's way. It is just what we have done. It is just what we will continue to do.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

TRUMP-PUTIN SUMMIT

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, yesterday, President Trump went through a walk back. President Trump's walk back performance was pathetic. It was weak, insincere, and thoroughly unconvincing. The President read a scripted clarification yesterday like he was in a hostage situation. All you had to do was look at his face. He couldn't even fully commit to it, adding off-the-cuff that other people could also be responsible for election interference in 2016. That is hardly a walk back, and it was concerning only one particular comment. The President did not address his lavish praise for Vladimir Putin in Helsinki. Is he going to walk that back? He blamed both countries—the United States and Russia—for the sour relations between us. Is he going to walk that back? He said U.S. stupidity and foolishness, not Russian aggression, was the reason our relationship with Russia was so bad. Is he going to

walk that back? He did not address his brazen attacks on the FBI while on foreign soil. Is he going to walk that back?

Now, late last night and this morning, the President is back to celebrating his meeting with Putin. He is walking back the walk back. That is what he did this morning. This is like Charlottesville redux. We all know what the President really thought. We know what he thought at Charlottesville. The walk back was unconvincing, and he went back to his old ways. We know what he thought at Helsinki. The walk back was unconvincing. And now, with his tweets this morning, he is back to his old ways.

The only reason there was a walk back is that the President was forced by pressure from many of my Republican friends here, from his allies in the media, and his own White House staff. They all pressured him to give that temporary walk back. But it is clear from today's tweets that he doesn't mean it, that he doesn't believe it, and, frankly, neither does anybody else. It is clear that he still believes President Putin over the consensus of the American intelligence community, and that puts Americans' security gravely at risk.

The President's reluctant, ham-handed, half-hearted "clarification" yesterday—almost entirely reversed this morning—is woefully inadequate. His behavior in Helsinki continues to demand a response from Congress, and there are many things we can do. But later this morning, if anything is true to form, the President will hold a Cabinet meeting, and his advisers will shower him with thanks and praise—this is what he craves—and will provide, perhaps, another version of what happened in Helsinki.

Given what happened in Helsinki and given that the President's walk back was so weak, there are several things we as a Congress can and should do. Talking the talk is not enough. Walking the walk is what is so important here. We need to act, not simply say "tsk, tsk; bad President" and then go back to business as usual, because the American polity, the American security, and the view of America in the eyes of the world have taken a severe setback. It is up to us in the Congress to try to undo that.

I mentioned a whole host of actions this body can take to counter Russia's malign activity, punish Putin for interfering in our elections, prevent him from doing it again, and ensure that the President is doing what is necessary to stand up for American interests. The Senate is not powerless to take action in the wake of President Trump's indefensible performance at his summit with Vladimir Putin. Let me reiterate and suggest some things we should do, and I believe we should do all of these.

First, our Republican colleagues need to join us in demanding immediate public testimony from the President's

national security team—those who were in Helsinki and those who would have knowledge of what happened in Helsinki.

We need to have immediate public testimony from Secretary Pompeo, from DNI Director Coats, and from Ambassador Huntsman.

Above all, we need the translator who was present at the one-on-one meeting with President Putin to testify openly before Congress. That is not usually done, but there are almost always other people in the room, so you don't need the translator. But for some reason—a reason that Americans and the world are wondering about—President Trump wanted no one else in the room. Having the translator come testify and tell us what happened there is an imperative. It is so important. It is rare for translators to come before Congress, but in this case, it is warranted—A, because no one else was in the room, by the President's direction, and B, because what happened there might have been so important, given what happened in public a few short hours afterward. The translator works for the Federal Government, works for the taxpayers, and may be the only person who can accurately report what President Trump said to President Putin behind closed doors, what concessions were made to Vladimir Putin. We want to know. Did the President make concessions that hurt our national security? What did he agree to?

Congress has a duty to conduct responsible oversight of the executive branch, particularly after what the President did in Helsinki. The President's summit calls for oversight. Having these people—particularly the translator—come testify is important. I understand Secretary Pompeo will appear before the Foreign Relations Committee next week, which is good, but we need to hear from others, including the translator. I urge Leader MCCONNELL and his leadership team to immediately request a hearing of the people I mentioned.

Second, the Republican leadership should soon place on the floor—ASAP—bipartisan legislation, led by Senators BOOKER, GRAHAM, COONS, and TILLIS, to protect the special counsel from political interference. This legislation passed out of the Judiciary Committee with bipartisan support. It has four sponsors—two Democrats, two Republicans. If Leader MCCONNELL is serious about the checks and balances and if what he said in the last day or two were not just meaningless words, he will put this legislation on the floor. It will pass.

Alongside demanding testimony from the President's national security team, passing legislation to protect the special counsel is probably the most important thing this body could do to ensure that President Trump's recklessness does not precipitate a constitutional crisis.

Third, we should ratchet up sanctions on Putin and his cronies, not