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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.

Our Father in Heaven, thank You for Your guidance, protection, wisdom, and love. We are grateful for Your compassion, for You are full of mercy and eager to forgive. We find refuge in the shadow of Your wings.

Lord, sustain our lawmakers. Teach them how to live and serve. May they honor You in their thoughts, words, and deeds. Give them the wisdom to live in complete dependence on You so that Your power can work through them. Help them to be attentive to Your precepts and sensitive to the unfolding of Your loving providence.

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.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

REMEMBERING JOHN MCCAIN

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, it was quite something to listen yester-

day to Members' heartfelt tributes to the memory of our friend Senator McCain. He meant so much to so many of us, both inside this Chamber and out.

As I noted yesterday, the Senate is eager to work on concrete ways to continue this momentum and provide a lasting tribute to this American hero long after this week's observances are complete. Following Senator Kennedy's death in 2009, for example, we named the Kennedy Caucus Room to honor his and his brothers' public service. Some have suggested we take a similar step so that the Armed Services Committee, on which our friend played such a critical role, would meet in a committee room named for Senator McCain.

Back in 2000, the Senate approved recommendations to add two additional portraits to the Capitol Senate Reception Room right off the Senate floor. Only seven Senators in the entire history of this institution are honored with portraits there.

I actually had the opportunity to serve in the bipartisan group that successfully recommended that Senators Arthur Vandenberg and Robert Wagner should appear there alongside Henry Clay, Daniel Webster, John Calhoun, Robert La Follette, Sr., and Robert Taft, who were selected by a special committee back in 1957. That committee, interestingly enough, was appointed by Lyndon Johnson and chaired by John F. Kennedy. I have also heard in recent days that perhaps Senator McCain's portrait should join that distinguished group. So it is a further tribute to our colleague that there is no shortage of good ideas.

In order to make sure we realize these intentions, I would like to put together an official group who can collaborate and bring together ideas from current Members, former colleagues, and friends. It will be bipartisan, as only befits John's legacy. Come to think of it, we should probably call it

not a committee but a gang. So I am glad we are able to form this gang to ensure that a suitable, lasting tribute becomes a reality. I will have more details regarding this group to share in the coming days after our friend is laid to rest.

AUGUST RECESS

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, August is usually a time for Senators to spend more time in our home States, meeting with our constituents and reporting on the progress we have made here in Washington, but this August had to be different. There was too much business left unfinished. So I made the decision to keep the Senate in session this month to continue working on behalf of the American people. I am proud to report that is just what we have done.

The Senate has now passed regular appropriations measures that account for 87 percent of next fiscal year's discretionary spending, we finalized our work on the National Defense Authorization Act named for Senator McCain, and in August alone, we have confirmed eight more of the President's well-qualified nominees for the Federal courts. But, as I have stated, the continuing, historic obstruction from Democrats on the President's nominees continues to make our progress on that front insufficient, so we will stay at it.

Currently before us are nominees to be Assistant Secretary to the Department of Health and Human Services, a Vice Chairman for the Federal Reserve, important posts at the Departments of Justice and Treasury, and a slate of impressive nominees for the Federal judiciary. I hope we can continue to make progress. It remains my intention to confirm all 17 of the nominees currently before us before the Senate concludes our business this week.

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



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ECONOMIC GROWTH

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, now on one final matter, lately there has been no shortage of outstanding economic headlines:

“Small business confidence hits another record high.”

“U.S. workers get biggest pay increase in nearly a decade.”

“Open jobs outnumber U.S. unemployed for third straight month.”

But it is also important to look beyond the headlines and ask whether all Americans are benefiting from this new prosperity.

For years, under the last administration, much of the so-called recovery only touched some communities and some industries. Many vulnerable Americans fell further and further behind. Today, things are different. A growing and vibrant economy has room for everyone. The unemployment rate for young Americans age 16 to 24 is now the lowest it has been since July 1966. Labor force participation among this same group is at its highest level in nearly a decade. The unemployment rate for workers with less than a high school diploma is now at its lowest level in recorded history.

As work opportunities have opened back up, the number of Americans seeking Social Security disability benefits has plummeted. As one scholar told the *New York Times*, “When the economy gets better, employers are more willing to look to other labor pools and be more accommodating. . . . People with disabilities also have a sense there may be something out there that fits their needs.”

Remember, for much of the Obama economy, opportunity creation was so insufficient that many vulnerable Americans were effectively put right on the sidelines. The job market was too crowded. Openings were too few. But this thriving economy, helped along by Republican policies, is a different story. There are more and more opportunities for everyone.

This reminds us that it is capitalism and free enterprise, not new government programs, that best equip Americans to provide for their families and pursue happiness. Free enterprise is what has led an aviation tech maker in Colorado to lean on a high school-age technician, whose skills are “highly integral” to the company. Free enterprise is what has led a semitrailer manufacturer in Wisconsin to hire inmates, as they reenter the community after paying their debt, and help them rebuild upright lives. There is an old line often attributed to Ronald Reagan: “The best social program is a job.”

While our Democratic friends keep railing against tax reform and regulatory reform, keep insisting we should compile more money and power here in Washington, Republicans know better. We know that a real recovery is when Americans of all ages, all abilities, and in all parts of the country have more opportunities to earn their own success, and we are proud that our policies are helping make that happen.

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. DURBIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

REMEMBERING JOHN MCCAIN

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, this is a sad time for the Senate and our Nation. With the passing of John McCain, our country lost a legend, and this Senate has lost a towering figure. I have lost a friend. America owes John McCain and his family our gratitude and respect for his courage and sacrifice and for the trials he endured to serve the Nation he loved.

John McCain entered this world with big shoes to fill. His father and grandfather were four-star admirals in the U.S. Navy. John McCain met and exceeded his family legacy.

I first met him 35 years ago, in 1982. We were brand-new freshmen Congressmen elected to the U.S. House. I spotted him on the other side of the floor in the Senate and, of course, I knew instantly who he was and worked up the courage to go over and introduce myself. Then, I asked him a favor.

I said: John, would you consider doing a cable TV show that I could send back to my Central Illinois district?

He said: Sure, I would be glad to.

I thought: That is amazing—a Democratic Congressman asking a new Republican Congressman to help him back in his district, and John McCain said yes.

It was the beginning of a friendship. That cable show wasn't shown beyond Central Illinois, but I still remember it and still thank John for his act of kindness. It was my first exposure to a unique style of communication that America would come to know as the “Straight Talk Express.” Sitting for that interview is a typically generous John McCain act, for which I am still grateful.

There is an old joke about an Irishman who walked past a brawl and said: Is this a private fight or can anyone get into it?

I think that man's name may have been McCain. Everyone who knew or served with John for any period of time got crosswise with him. I can remember there, in the well of the Senate, John McCain walking up to me, getting within an inch of my face and chewing me out about some article that he had read in the *Chicago Tribune*. He was so mad he was about to explode, and he wheeled around and walked away.

I thought: What did I say? I can't even remember the article.

I raced back to look up the *Chicago Tribune* article he referred to and still couldn't understand his anger, and I thought: How am I going to make

amends with John. He has been my friend for so long.

The next day he came up to me, and I got ready for the second round. He put his arm around me and said: It wasn't that bad after all. We are still friends.

That was typical John McCain—a volcanic temper but an embracing, loving approach when it came to friendship. That was John. He was passionate in his beliefs, but he was not a man to hold grudges. He understood that two people can disagree on issues today, and still both love this country and work together tomorrow.

Occasionally, he would invite you on a trip. Be careful. I said yes several times. A John McCain trip over a weekend was something you don't soon forget. If there is anybody out there who thinks that Senators with John McCain were sitting poolside drinking these mixed drinks with paper umbrellas, they have it all wrong. John McCain's trips on the weekend were more like Bataan death marches. From the minute you got on that plane until you got back to Washington, it was a nonstop schedule. Everything had to be done. We had to see three countries, not two, and we had to get it done and get back to Washington. You learned so much.

I went to Ukraine with John. I remember walking the streets of Kiev in Ukraine. People were coming up to John—people who remembered that he showed up in the Maidan Square when the revolution was underway and spoke for those who were defying Moscow—and they still remembered John McCain and couldn't wait to come up and say hello and thank him. It was that way in so many places of the world. I was lucky to be there. I was lucky to be a part of it, lucky to see history unfold, and lucky to count John as a friend.

John and I had our disagreements. In fact, there was one solid year when we barely spoke. At the end of that year, I found an excuse to walk over to his office to see him on some issue. I remember that he stood up and greeted me. He shook my hand. He looked me in the eye and said: I am glad this is over between us.

So was I. It was one of the happier days I served in the Senate.

His ability to see beyond party labels was one of the qualities that so many of us loved and admired about him. It was a lesson he learned from his family. It is a truth, I imagine, that he came to see even more clearly during the 5½ torturous years—two of them in solitary confinement—that he spent as a prisoner of war in that hellish place known as the Hanoi Hilton.

We are stronger together than we are divided. John McCain knew that. His entire life was a testimony to that powerful truth. It is why, as a prisoner of war, John McCain refused offers of release. He knew what the rules were. The rules were “first in, first out.” He was not the first in. He just happened