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## Senate

The Senate met at 3:01 p.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.

Lord of our being, on yesterday, as we remembered September 11, we also felt gratitude for Your sovereignty over the affairs of humanity. May our lawmakers trust in Your unfolding providence to continue to sustain this land we love and guide our world.

Lord, disentangle our Senators from life's turmoil, inspiring them to focus on accomplishing Your purposes. Lord, give them the wisdom to find time to read Sacred Scriptures. Remind them that they belong to You, as You draw them daily nearer to Yourself.

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 (Mr. TOOMEY). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

### RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

### NOMINATION OF BRETT KAVANAUGH

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, the Nation watched the President's out-

standing Supreme Court nominee last week, Judge Brett Kavanaugh, testify before the Judiciary Committee.

They saw Chairman GRASSLEY guide the committee with gracious, strong leadership and an incredible amount of patience. The chairman deserves our gratitude, as do all of the committee staff, whose hard work and dedication made it possible for Senators to thoroughly examine Judge Kavanaugh and review more pages of documents pertaining to his career than were produced for the last five Supreme Court nominees combined.

The American people also saw an extensive extremely impressive nominee. Judge Kavanaugh was candid and forthcoming, within the ethical constraints that exist for judicial nominees. He demonstrated the intellectual brilliance and thoughtful temperament for which he is so widely known. He showed exactly why he is universally acknowledged as a leading legal mind and exactly why he will make a phenomenal Associate Justice of the Supreme Court.

Unfortunately, not everyone performed as admirably or as professionally last week. Some of our Democratic colleagues repeatedly interrupted Chairman GRASSLEY, behaved rudely toward the nominee, and hauled out one dishonest partisan attack after another to try to distort his record and smear Judge Kavanaugh.

Now, this is a nominee who Lisa Blatt, a prominent litigator and self-described liberal Democrat, testified as "unquestionably qualified by his extraordinary intellect, experience, and temperament."

This is a nominee who prominent liberal law professor Akhil Amar praised as "studious and open-minded." This left-leaning academic described Judge Kavanaugh's nomination as "President Trump's finest hour."

This is a nominee whose record and reputation have revealed Democrats' partisan attacks to be futile and silly

and dishonest. At this point, dishonest attacks and half-truths are all that is left for our colleagues who made up their minds long ago that they were going to oppose Judge Kavanaugh no matter what—no matter what.

You don't need to take my word for this. The Washington Post's Fact Checker called out one of our Democratic colleagues and assigned her shameless misrepresentation of Judge Kavanaugh's testimony four Pinocchios—the strongest condemnation. This particular Senator cherry-picked from a sentence where Judge Kavanaugh was paraphrasing one side's argument in a case that came before him, stripped his description of its content, and held up the party's position in that case as though it was Judge Kavanaugh's own personal opinion.

But by trying to slime Judge Kavanaugh, the Democrats are only underscoring one of his most impressive skills—his widely acclaimed talent for thinking through all parties' perspectives and engaging fairly with the full range of views, regardless of his personal beliefs.

This and all other specious attacks that were trotted out said absolutely nothing about Judge Kavanaugh's actual record. They said a great deal about the Senators who were willing to resort to them in order to appease the far-left special interests, but I suspect that everyone who listened fairly to Judge Kavanaugh and the other witnesses came away seriously impressed with his qualifications for the Court, and I look forward to voting to confirm him here on the Senate floor in the coming weeks.

### NOMINATION OF CHARLES P. RETTIG

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, on another matter, later this afternoon, the Senate will vote to advance the nomination of Charles Rettig to serve as Commissioner of the IRS. Mr.

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



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Rettig's nomination comes at a crucial time, as the Federal Government continues to implement once-in-a-generation tax reform.

Recent memory reminds us just how important it is that all Americans get a fair shake from the agency that oversees the Tax Code. This historic new law makes it all the more important that the IRS continue to modernize and improve its technological infrastructure.

So I look forward to this nominee's getting to work on behalf of the American taxpayers.

#### APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, we will then turn back to appropriations. This week we will vote to approve the conference report that will fund energy and water, military construction and the VA, and the legislative branch.

This week's bills contain \$147 billion for projects ranging from waterways infrastructure to military family housing, to nuclear security and much more. This legislation equips the Army Corps of Engineers to carry out harbor maintenance, inland waterways restoration, and critical flood damage reduction efforts. It enables the Department of Energy to support groundbreaking research in computing systems and energy efficiency and to step up the security of our Nation's nuclear arsenal.

The Military Construction and VA title funds overdue maintenance to operational facilities, as well as nearly \$2 billion in support for military family and personnel housing, and it expands resources for in-house VA medical services and broadens community options for veterans seeking vital treatment through funding of the VA MISSION Act.

These are national priorities with local impacts that will be felt in every one of our States.

In my home State of Kentucky, hundreds of millions of dollars will go toward training facilities at Fort Campbell and Fort Knox, infrastructure improvements in Appalachia, and environmental cleanup efforts in Paducah.

I know all Senators can tell similar stories for their own States. So we are looking forward to taking another step forward on regular appropriations and passing this conference report this week.

I want to thank Chairman SHELBY and Senator LEAHY for all they have done to keep this process going forward.

Thanks also to the subcommittee chairmen, Senator BOOZMAN and Senator DAINES; Senator ALEXANDER, who chaired the conference; and all of my colleagues on the Appropriations Committee.

So let's pass this legislation and keep making progress together.

#### OPIOID EPIDEMIC

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, on one final matter, the pain that opioid

addiction and drug abuse has inflicted on families across America is almost unfathomable. Every day, 115 more American lives are lost to overdose. Synthetic opioid deaths nationwide skyrocketed six-fold from 2014 to last year alone.

Sadly, the Commonwealth of Kentucky is all too familiar with these statistics. More than 1,500 Kentuckians died from a drug overdose in 2017, and Kentucky has ranked among the top 10 States for opioid fatalities for several years.

The tragic medical trends are only one of the ways this crisis is crippling communities all across our country. These drugs eat away at economic opportunities, they erode our labor market, and they make it even harder for distressed communities to get back on their feet.

So this is nothing short of a national emergency, and that is why Congress has already passed major legislation to address it, and very soon we will take significant new action by passing the legislation that has been shepherded by Senator ALEXANDER and his committee colleagues. This landmark package combines work from 5 different committees and 70 different Senators.

I am proud that two of my bills are included—the CAREER Act, to help individuals in recovery transition back into the workforce and access housing services, and a second provision that will step up accountability on Federal efforts to combat addiction among pregnant mothers.

These are just two pieces of this comprehensive package.

It will cut the supply of illegal drugs that pour over our borders, make it easier for communities to invest in recovery efforts, extend a helping hand to families and caregivers, and provide for the longer term medical innovation we need to put this crisis in the rear-view mirror.

I am pleased to have played a part in developing this landmark response.

I am grateful to Chairman ALEXANDER and his colleagues, and I will be proud to vote for this legislation very soon.

#### THE ECONOMY

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, on one final matter, it has been a rough week for our Democratic colleagues who claim that the Republican policy agenda wouldn't lay a good foundation for a strong economy, but it has been a great week for America's workers and middle-class families.

The evidence keeps piling up. Tax reform and regulatory reform have helped create the conditions for one of the best economic moments the American people have seen in recent memory, and some measures are at their best levels in decades.

Here is just a small sample:

"U.S. job growth accelerated in August and wages notched their largest annual increase in more than nine years."

Another headline reads: "Job openings hit record high."

Another: "Small business optimism surges to highest level ever."

This economy is literally flying through all-time records faster than I can come to the floor and discuss them. Many of these numbers are unprecedented. They are exactly the opposite of what some gloom-and-doom Democrats insisted would happen if this unified Republican government put our opportunity agenda into effect.

Fortunately, my Republican colleagues and I know that getting Washington, DC, out of the way helps make good things happen for the American people, and that is exactly what we will continue to do.

#### ENERGY AND WATER, LEGISLATIVE BRANCH, AND MILITARY CONSTRUCTION AND VETERANS AFFAIRS APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2019—CONFERENCE REPORT

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask that the Chair lay before the Senate the conference report to accompany H.R. 5895.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair lays before the Senate the conference report to accompany H.R. 5895, which will be stated by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The committee of conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 5895), making appropriations for the energy and water development and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2019, and for other purposes, having met, after full and free conference, have agreed to their respective Houses:

That the House recede from its disagreement to the amendment of the Senate and agree to the same with an amendment, and the Senate agree to the same, signed by a majority of the conferees on the part of both Houses.

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the conference report.

(The conference report is printed in the House proceedings of the RECORD of September 10, 2018.)

#### CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk for the conference report.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

#### CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the conference report to accompany H.R. 5895, an act making appropriations for energy and water development and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2019, and for other purposes.

Mitch McConnell, John Thune, Thom Tillis, Lisa Murkowski, Mike Rounds, Jon Kyl, Lamar Alexander, Orrin G. Hatch, John Barrasso, Mike Crapo, Bill Cassidy, Roger F. Wicker, Pat Roberts, Ben Sasse, Lindsey Graham, Chuck Grassley, John Cornyn.