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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Thursday, September 20, 2018, at 9:30 a.m.

Senate

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2018

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable CINDY HYDE-SMITH, a Senator from the State of Mississippi.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal God, whose mercy is great unto the Heavens, help us to do what is right. May we not forget that You are the judge of the Earth and that we are accountable to You. Protect us from our enemies, for we place our trust in You.

Lord, sustain our Senators. Surround them with the shield of Your favor as they seek to live for Your glory. Hasten the day when the just rule of Your Kingdom shall fill the Earth with health and life and peace. Be exulted, O God, above the Heavens. Let Your glory be over the Earth.

We pray in Your great 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 senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, September 18, 2018.

To the Senate.

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable CINDY HYDE-SMITH, a Senator from the State of Mississippi, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ORRIN G. HATCH,
President pro tempore.

Mrs. HYDE-SMITH thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

NOMINATION OF BRETT KAVANAUGH

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, yesterday, Senator GRASSLEY announced that the Judiciary Committee will continue its hearings for Judge Brett Kavanaugh's nomination to the Supreme Court on Monday morning. Dr. Christine Blasey Ford of California and Judge Kavanaugh have both been invited to testify under oath.

Dr. Ford will have the opportunity to offer sworn testimony. She communicated with the ranking Democrat on the committee in writing nearly 7 weeks ago, but through no fault of hers, Senate Democrats chose to play politics and keep it secret throughout the entirety of Judge Kavanaugh's regular confirmation process. They sat on this information for nearly 7 weeks,

until they leaked it to the press on the eve of the scheduled committee vote.

But as my colleague, the senior Senator from Texas, said yesterday, the blatant malpractice demonstrated by our colleagues across the aisle will not stop the Senate from moving forward in a responsible manner.

As I said yesterday, I have full confidence in Chairman GRASSLEY to lead the committee through the sensitive and highly irregular situation in which the Democrats' tactics have left all of us—all of us—Judge Kavanaugh, Dr. Ford, and the entire Senate.

Dr. Ford will be heard, and, of course, Judge Kavanaugh will have the opportunity to defend himself against this accusation—an accusation that he has unequivocally denied and that stands at odds with every other piece of the overwhelming positive testimony we have received about his character from his close friends, colleagues, and law clerks, from the distant past to the present day, including the high school years during which this misconduct is alleged to have taken place.

So this alleged incident is completely at variance with his entire history. He welcomes the opportunity to address the committee about this claim.

But, colleagues, we should not have gotten to this point in this manner, at this time. That this process has played out with so little order and so little sensitivity lies solely at the feet of Senate Democrats who sought political advantage in leaking this to the press

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



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instead of vetting it through proper channels.

But this is where we are. So on Monday Chairman GRASSLEY and our colleagues on the Judiciary Committee will reconvene. They and the American people will hear testimony under oath.

OPIOID EPIDEMIC

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, on an entirely different matter, yesterday the Senate sent a message to the millions of Americans who have personally done battle with addiction to opioids and prescription drugs. We sent a message to the families who have watched our Nation's drug overdose fatalities double in the last decade alone; to those in recovery who have struggled to access the housing and work opportunities they need to get back on their feet; to the Governors, mayors, and local leaders who have seen communities from rural towns to inner cities literally hollowed out and threatened by this epidemic; to the police, firefighters, paramedics, and other first responders whom our Nation has asked to confront this crisis, often without all of the specialized training and resources they need; and to every American affected by the opioid epidemic.

The landmark legislation the Senate passed yesterday says: The Nation will not stand for this. More help is on the way. Yesterday evening we voted to build on Congress's prior efforts and deliver more relief to the communities that need it most.

This landmark legislation addresses the crisis at every step of the way. It contains provisions to cut down on fentanyl and other illegal drugs coming across our borders, to reform how painkillers are prescribed and packaged, to invest in comprehensive opioid recovery centers, and to provide for more long-term medical research.

It also contains two provisions I was pleased to secure for my fellow Kentuckians and for the whole country. The CAREER Act will help individuals in recovery to find housing and the job opportunities they need to rebuild lives of sobriety, and the Protecting Mothers and Infants Act will help the Federal Government to do more to support pregnant women and to protect unborn children from these drugs. This landmark legislation is like a Swiss Army knife that will help the Federal Government to fight opioid addiction in many different ways.

I am grateful to Chairman ALEXANDER for assembling this package, integrating the input of more than 70 Senators and shepherding it through passage.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, on one final matter, currently before the Senate is a crucial appropriations measure for the upcoming fiscal year: the conference report that will fund

the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Defense. It is the second minibus conference report we have taken up in what has already been an important year for regular appropriations.

Thanks to the leadership of Senators SHELBY and LEAHY, all 12 spending bills were favorably reported from the Appropriations Committee by the end of June, the fastest pace in 30 years. For the first time in 15 years, the Senate passed our Labor-HHS-Education bill before the beginning of the fiscal year.

These milestones may sound like inside baseball, but what they signify is a Senate that is getting its appropriations process back on track, a Senate that is attending to vital priorities for our country. The package we are voting on today will account for over half of the Federal discretionary spending for next year. Critically, after subjecting America's All-Volunteer Armed Forces to years of belt-tightening, this legislation will build on our recent progress in rebuilding the readiness of our military and investing more in the men and women who wear the uniform. This conference report increases appropriations in the Department of Defense by \$19.8 billion over fiscal year 2018 levels. Once enacted, our warfighters will have certainty in their funding—on time, on October 1, for the first time in 10 years.

First and foremost, this reflects a major investment in personnel—more resources for recruiting the forces that our military commanders have called for and the largest servicemember pay increase in nearly a decade. It fully funds the Pentagon's stated requests for operational support, including hundreds of billions in base support and maintenance funding, ensuring that critical ongoing missions continue at Fort Knox, Fort Campbell, and the Blue Grass Army Depot in Kentucky and at installations all around the world.

It also supports our National Guard and Reserve components, including many of the important missions executed by the Kentucky National Guard. The bill further ensures that combat units are equipped with overwhelming, cutting-edge capabilities: critical funding for aircraft and aviation programs, for new battle force ships, and hundreds of millions for our missile defense capabilities.

In addition to our Armed Forces, this bill will also provide for communities wounded by drug addiction, for families working hard to save for college tuition, and for workers who are trying to catch up in ever-evolving industries.

Under the Labor-HHS-Education title, this package would fund critical medical research at the National Institutes of Health, ongoing support for State opioid response grants, and apprenticeship and job training programs. It sets aside special funds for priorities like combatting infectious diseases that ride on the coattails of the opioid epidemic and retaining dis-

located rural workers—both key priorities in States like Kentucky and around the country.

So to sum up, there is more support for the best trained, best equipped, and strongest military force in the world and more support for the health and prosperity of American communities and workers—all the more reasons why I will be proud to vote for this legislation and why I urge every one of my colleagues to join me.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding the provisions of rule XXII, the Senate vote on the motion to invoke cloture on the conference report to accompany H.R. 6157 at 12 noon today; further, that if invoked, all time be considered expired and the Senate vote on adoption of the conference report.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

Seeing none, it is so ordered.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, morning business is closed.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AND LABOR, HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, AND EDUCATION APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2019—CONFERENCE REPORT

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the conference report of H.R. 6157, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A conference report to accompany H.R. 6157, an act making appropriations for the Department of Defense for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2019, and for other purposes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The assistant Democratic leader.

NOMINATION OF BRETT KAVANAUGH

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I think it is important for us at this moment to reflect on a little Senate history. This goes back to the year 1991, 27 years ago. It was a chapter in the history of the Senate and the Senate Judiciary Committee that many people who lived through it either as observers or participants will never forget. It refers to the hearings for the approval of the nomination of Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court.

Let me read to you a summary of what occurred.