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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Friday, October 12, 2018, at 9:30 a.m.

Senate

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2018

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 Lord God, You are our hiding place. You alone are our mighty rock and fortress. Thank You for directing our steps.

Today, provide our lawmakers with Your peace, infusing them with the wisdom that strives for faithfulness. Lord, let that faithfulness so energize them that harmony will triumph over discord. May the effects of this unity be felt in our Nation and world.

Teach us all to serve You with all our hearts, souls, minds, and strength.

We pray in Your sacred 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.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COTTON). The majority leader is recognized.

S. 3021

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, later this morning, the Senate will

vote to deliver the most substantial infrastructure legislation yet considered by this Congress to communities across America.

Yesterday, I spoke about President Trump's challenge to improve our Nation's infrastructure, and I laid out how America's Water Infrastructure Act will represent a major step toward meeting that challenge nationwide. This comprehensive legislation meets all sorts of pressing needs unique to different corners of our country—from dams, levees, and flood control, to safer drinking water and sewage systems.

There are national issues at stake, such as the ability of American producers and manufacturers to access markets around the world, but the questions at stake are also very local. By way of example, I would like to highlight just a few of the ways this legislation will have a direct impact on communities in my home State of Kentucky.

First, the bill before us includes a measure that will protect property owners from paying thousands of dollars in fees to fix decades-old surveying mistakes by the Army Corps of Engineers. This is a critical issue for Kentucky's Rough River community, where the Army Corps' own errors threatened to stick local landowners with a steep bill. I was pleased to lead the charge in crafting a commonsense solution to prevent this Kentucky community from paying a financial price for government mistakes.

This legislation also halts the imposition of burdensome fees on water use in Lake Cumberland, and it extends my Freedom to Fish Act for 5 years by bar-

ring the Army Corps from prohibiting fishing in the tailwaters of Barkley and Wolf Creek Dam. For so many communities in my State, fishing is both a hobby and a way of life. This is not an area where the Federal Government needs to jump in between Americans and their own backyards. We had to pare back this regulatory overreach. This legislation does exactly that.

Here is one more example. In States like Kentucky where waterways play such a pivotal economic role, it is also crucial that the Army Corps be equipped to demolish defunct parts of our waterways infrastructure that now stand in the way of progress. These efforts will allow communities along Kentucky's Green and Barren Rivers to make these waterways healthier, safer, and more attractive for outdoor recreation.

I am proud this legislation authorizes these important steps forward.

This is the beauty of America's waterways. It is a national issue, but it touches local communities across the country in very direct and specific ways.

I am proud of the ways this legislation will help Kentucky. I know each of my colleagues knows just as many ways this bill will impact their own State for the better. That is underscored by last night's overwhelming bipartisan vote of 96 to 3. I look forward to a similar bipartisan vote later this morning to send this significant infrastructure bill to the President's desk for signature into law.

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



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S6735

HEALTHCARE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, on another matter, today the Senate will also vote on an effort by my Democratic colleagues to strip away health insurance options for families whom ObamaCare has failed.

The first 4 years of the ObamaCare experience was one of failure after failure—skyrocketing premiums and broken websites built on broken promises. Many families were caught right in the middle of the ObamaCare mess—those who earned too much to receive subsidies but not enough to keep pace with premiums—so it became even more important to look for alternatives. The American people are resourceful. Some held on to so-called grandfathered and grandmothered plans, and others looked for lower cost, short-term plans that could be held for up to a year.

We all know that Big Government doesn't like it when citizens try to avoid the micromanagement and run their own lives as they see fit, so in the waning months of the Obama administration, Democrats issued a new regulation that cut these plans from 12 months down to 3 months and made them nonrenewable. I guess the goal was to force even more Americans into ObamaCare. The real effect was just to punish these people twice for Democrats' bad policy.

Fortunately, this year the Trump administration righted the ship. They undid the restriction and restored the status quo that was in place from the 1990s through most of the Obama administration. It was a simple fix. It doesn't take away the choices they have under ObamaCare but empowers Americans to use this alternative choice if they prefer it. According to even the liberal Urban Institute, more than 1.7 million Americans will likely be insured with this option, who otherwise would have gone uninsured. But apparently our Democratic colleagues can't tolerate even this modest step away from top-down government control. They have introduced a resolution of disapproval to overturn the Trump administration's fix and snatch these options away from families once more. We will be voting on it today.

I know my Democratic colleagues are embarrassed by the state of ObamaCare. It has been more than 8 years since they passed their signature law that was supposed to make it all better. Instead, working Americans are saddled with increasing costs and decreasing choices. But surely they must have a better answer than snatching away one of the remaining options that some Americans still prefer to anything Democrats have been able to come up with.

This is an easy decision. I urge every one of my colleagues to vote against this resolution. Our constituents deserve more options, not fewer. The last thing we should do is destroy one of the options that is still actually working for American families.

THE ECONOMY

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, one final matter. While the Senate was focused on Justice Kavanaugh's confirmation last Friday, our economy reached a major milestone. According to the latest Department of Labor report, unemployment in the United States of America has now fallen to 3.7 percent. That is the lowest unemployment rate since 1969. It is now 3.7 percent—the lowest unemployment rate since 1969. The share of Americans who are seeking work but cannot find it is as low as it has been in just shy of 50 years.

There was other good news as well. Unlike what happened too often in the previous decade, this drop in unemployment did not come from discouraged workers giving up their search altogether; to the contrary, 150,000 more Americans joined the labor force last month, and the unemployment rate still went down. Now, that is an opportunity economy. That is exactly what an opportunity economy looks like.

Day after day, my Republican colleagues and I have come to the floor and outlined all the things we are doing to try to help generate precisely this kind of economic momentum for the American people. This unified Republican government has rolled back regulations and cut redtape at a pace that hasn't been seen for years. We have handed American families and job creators the most significant Tax Code overhaul in 30 years, lower tax rates, a bigger child tax credit, more help with small businesses, and better incentives to invest and create jobs right here on American soil. Our actions have been clear, and our economy is sending equally clear signals in response: the highest consumer confidence we have seen in nearly 18 years, the highest small business confidence we have seen in 35 years, and now the lowest unemployment rate we have seen in almost half a century.

I have said it before, and I will say it again: Government itself is not creating this prosperity. Republicans know that growth starts with workers and entrepreneurs, not with Washington. Government can either put the wind in America's faces or at their backs, and there is little question which way the wind has been blowing these past 2 years. It certainly is not "Armageddon" or "crumbs," as the House Democratic leader notoriously proclaimed in recent months. It is not a "disaster," as my friend the Senate Democratic leader has suggested. No, it is rising wages, more job opportunities, and new investment, and it is reaching kitchen tables in communities large and small all across our country. The real winners here are the American people. Republicans are just proud that our policies are helping them do what they do best.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 11:30 a.m. will be equally divided between the two leaders or their designees.

Mr. McCONNELL. 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. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

S. 3021

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, as you know this week we are voting and considering an important bipartisan piece of legislation known as America's Water Infrastructure Act, the most sweeping infrastructure package to be considered by Congress this year. It will literally reauthorize billions of dollars of spending for our Nation's ports, harbors, and waterways, and it will end wasteful spending on water projects that are no longer necessary.

I thank Chairman BARRASSO and Ranking Member CARPER for spearheading this legislation through the Committee on Environment and Public Works. They deserve a tremendous amount of credit for bringing us to where we are today.

Drinking water, wastewater systems, dams, levees, ports, and reservoirs matter to every single community in America. They are usually not front and center on our priority list, though, so people naturally take them for granted. We take it as a given that water will be available, that it will be treated and filtered, that wastewater will somehow be transported wherever it needs to go, and that dams and levees will hold up when they are put to the test by rising floods.

Actually, though, that is not the case in many parts of the world, and we in America do take that for granted because usually none of these present a problem to most Americans. None of these problems happen in the United States if public and Federal resources are allocated in the right ways, and that is why we can't afford to let our guard down and be lax when it comes to maintaining these important national treasures.

That is what makes this bill we are voting on so crucial. It is not just a drop in the bucket, so to speak. It is one of the main reasons the bucket—