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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable RAND PAUL, a Senator from the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal Father, we rejoice in Your strength. In spite of gathering storm clouds, our confidence in Your love sustains us. Be merciful to our Nation, for You are our hope.

Lord, provide our lawmakers today with the music of Your wisdom, that they may bring hope out of despair and joy out of sadness. Increase their faith, hope, and love, that they may receive Your promises.

Teach us all to celebrate, even in the darkness, because You are the God who saves us.

We pray in Your sovereign 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 legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,

Washington, DC, December 12, 2018.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable RAND PAUL, a Senator

from the Commonwealth of Kentucky, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ORRIN G. HATCH,
President pro tempore.

Mr. PAUL thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

BUSINESS BEFORE THE SENATE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, the end of the year is fast approaching. There are a number of important items left on the Senate's agenda and little time to address them. We will clear more of the President's well-qualified executive branch and judicial nominees from the calendar. We will consider updated legislation supported by the administration to address criminal justice. We need to pass an agreement to fill the remaining gaps in appropriations, including critical funding for securing our borders.

Fortunately, the Senate took a major step yesterday by passing the farm bill. We got that much closer to delivering a big shot in the arm to farmers in rural communities across our country.

Along with providing certainty to agricultural communities, I am especially proud that the legislation will open a new door for farmers in Kentucky and around the country to explore the full potential of industrial hemp. This is the culmination of a lot of work by a number of us here in Washington, but really the victory is for the growers, processors, manufacturers, and consumers who stand to benefit from this growing marketplace.

American hemp has a long and distinguished history. Some of this very body's notable figures, including Thomas Jefferson and Henry Clay, are

believed to have grown it. During World War II, the Federal Government even encouraged hemp production to support the war effort. Unfortunately, because of hemp's illicit cousin, marijuana, the Federal Government subsequently banned it altogether for generations.

In 2013, Kentucky agricultural leaders showed me hemp's incredible potential for the Blue Grass State. We decided it was time to let America's farmers show everyone what hemp could do.

First, I included experimental pilot programs for States like Kentucky in the 2014 farm bill, and the results have been undeniable. Hemp has quickly become a booming success. Its uses range from food and pharmaceuticals to home insulation and automobile parts. Enthusiastic farmers quickly applied to plant the crop in their fields, entrepreneurs opened businesses selling hemp-based products, and consumers got to enjoy a whole new set of goods featuring American-made hemp. In my home State alone, farmers grew in excess of 3,200 acres of hemp in 2017. This year, the number of acres more than doubled. Estimates show that, once legalized, sales from hemp will soon surpass \$1 billion.

Watching this remarkable success, we knew it was time to take the next step. I introduced legislation to finally and fully legalize hemp. Working with agricultural leaders and law enforcement in Kentucky and here in Washington, we built support.

As a member of the Agriculture Committee, I was proud that the legislation was included in the Senate's version of the farm bill. I was proud to serve personally on the conference committee to ensure that the language stayed in place. Yesterday, the Senate passed the conference report. The House will pass it as early as later today, and this provision and the rest of the farm bill will be on its way to President Trump's desk to become 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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What exactly will this legislation do? The farm bill we passed yesterday both legalizes hemp as an agricultural commodity and removes it from the controlled substances list. It gives States the opportunity to be the primary overseers of hemp production. It also allows hemp researchers to apply for competitive Federal grants from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and made hemp eligible for crop insurance.

Together, these features will encourage new opportunities for struggling farmers and their families—new products for use in construction, healthcare, and manufacturing, and new jobs in a broad range of fields.

I have been honored to gain many partners throughout this process. Here in the Senate, thanks to the leading Democratic cosponsor of our original bill, Senator WYDEN, and to my Kentucky colleague, Senator PAUL. Congressman JAMIE COMER has championed hemp for years and sponsored our legislation in the House. In Kentucky, Commissioner Ryan Quarles has been a longtime ally of this crop's bright future in our Commonwealth.

I look forward to the House passing our farm bill soon and sending it to President Trump for his signature. I would be happy to loan him my hemp pen for the occasion.

PRIVACY REFORM

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, on an entirely different matter, later today the Senate will vote on an attempt by some of our Democratic colleagues to undoe a pro-privacy reform that Secretary Mnuchin and the Treasury Department implemented just a few months ago.

As I discussed yesterday, there is neither any valid accounting reason nor a disclosure reason why the IRS needs access to the donor lists of the kinds of tax-exempt, nonprofit organizations in question. The Treasury Department has said that "the IRS simply does not need tax returns with donor names and addresses to do its job in this area."

In a climate that is increasingly hostile to certain kinds of political expression and open debate, the last thing Washington needs to do is to chill the exercise of free speech and add to the sense of intimidation. The Senate should take a stand for America's privacy and the First Amendment and reject this misguided resolution.

YEMEN

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, later on, the Senate may consider a resolution by the junior Senators from Utah and Vermont that pertains to the situation in Yemen. In effect, these Members want to end the limited American assistance to the Saudi-led coalition that is supporting the U.N.-recognized government in the civil war in Yemen.

I will oppose the motion to proceed to the Sanders-Lee resolution and

would urge Members to join me in voting against it. Members on both sides have legitimate concerns about the war in Yemen, about the U.S. interests tangled up in this conflict, and especially about the horrible plight of Yemeni citizens who are caught in the crossfire. And where Saudi Arabia is concerned, I think every single Member of this body shares grave concerns about the murder of Khashoggi and wants accountability. We also want to preserve a 70-year partnership between the United States and Saudi Arabia, and we want to ensure that it continues to serve American interests and stabilizes a dangerous and critical region.

This is the backdrop for today's debate: challenging circumstances that require the Senate to act with prudence and precision. But the Sanders-Lee resolution is neither precise enough nor prudent enough.

For one thing, I do not believe the resolution should be privileged under the War Powers Act. The United States is not involved in combat. It is not dropping ordnance. It is no longer even providing air-to-air refueling. As I have stated previously, even if these activities continued, it is a far cry to equate them with "hostilities." Regardless, the practice has already stopped.

If the Senate wants to pick a constitutional fight with the executive branch over war powers, I would advise my colleagues to pick a better case.

Second, their resolution is an inappropriate vehicle. There are more careful ways the Senate could express its concern about the conflict in Yemen or our partnership with Saudi Arabia without taking such a blunt instrument to the policy in this area. Indeed, this resolution would threaten other support the United States is providing that is designed to improve coalition targeting and limit civilian casualties.

Finally, from the Senate's perspective, considering a War Powers Act resolution has the potential to present a lengthy, messy process when our calendar is already packed more than full with other important business to complete for the American people.

This resolution's shortcomings do not mean the Senate must do nothing. There is a better option at hand. Legislation introduced by Chairman CORKER does a good job capturing bipartisan concerns about both the war in Yemen and the behavior of our Saudi partners more broadly without triggering an extended debate over war powers while we hasten to finish all our other work. I have cosponsored his legislation. It is a superior road to the outcome that most Senators want. So I urge every Member to vote against considering the Sanders-Lee resolution later today and join me in supporting Chairman CORKER's responsible alternative.

TRIBUTE TO ORRIN HATCH

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, on a completely different matter, it is my bittersweet job this morning to pay

tribute to a historic Senate career that will conclude at the end of this Congress.

Senator ORRIN HATCH has faithfully represented the people of Utah in this body for the last 42 years. That makes him the dean of our Republican conference and, of course, President pro tempore of the Senate. It also makes him the longest serving Republican Senator in our Nation's history. So ORRIN's longevity alone would have guaranteed him a place among the giants of the Senate. As he joked a couple of weeks ago, one of the most memorable experiences from his early Senate tenure was the confirmation process for Justice Joseph Story back in 1811. Apparently it was quite the scene, ORRIN tells us.

Seriously, though, the most impressive thing about ORRIN HATCH is not the historic length of his tenure here but how completely filled with accomplishments that time has been.

But let's back up for a moment. It wasn't always obvious that our friend would become a star U.S. Senator. At one point, it looked like another kind of stardom might be more probable. And I am not just talking about the successful law practice he set aside to run for office. We all know about ORRIN's musical talents and his contributions to the recording industry. I am told that just a few years before ORRIN's first campaign in 1976, the lawyer and family man was moonlighting as band manager for a groundbreaking Mormon folk group called The Free Agency. Well, it is fortunate for all of us that this free agent felt called to bring his talents here to Washington.

There is a famous story from that first campaign back in 1976. Think about this. ORRIN had no political experience—a stranger to running for office. But he had this sense that public service was his mission. Perhaps he was thinking of his beloved big brother Jesse, who gave his life in World War II when ORRIN was just 10.

He started asking around: Did his friends and family think he had a shot at a Senate seat? Few liked his chances in the primary and even fewer against the three-term incumbent. But the worst reaction of all came from his beloved wife Elaine.

The story goes that when ORRIN filed his papers to run, she cried for 3 straight days. I am not sure whether that was unhappiness at the prospect of an east coast life they hadn't planned for or a fairly accurate assessment of his chances at that point.

But ORRIN beat the odds. With the help of a big endorsement from a former California Governor named Ronald Reagan, this young, conservative upstart pulled off the upset.

Actually, there is a little secret surrounding this endorsement. Few people know this, but I am sorry to say that ORRIN was actually the Gipper's second choice. You see, our friend was so unknown back then that Reagan's first telegram offered a ringing endorsement