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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.

Eternal Lord God, who rules the raging of the seas, we praise You that we continue to be sustained by Your goodness and mercies. We are grateful for each heartbeat we receive as a gift from Your bounty. Help us to so live that we will never forget our accountability to You.

Lord, bless our Senators, enlighten and illuminate them that they may cultivate an experiential relationship with You, delighting to follow Your precepts. Touch their lips, that they may speak words that unite and bring hope. Give them hearts that are willing to serve. Strengthen them when tempted and guide them when they are perplexed.

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.

SENATE AGENDA

Mr. McCONNELL. First, for the information of all of our colleagues, later

this morning I will introduce a continuing resolution that will ensure continuous funding to the Federal Government. The measure will provide the resources necessary to continue normal operations through February 8.

Let's review why this step was necessary.

Even in the face of a great need to secure the border and following good-faith efforts by the President's team, our Democratic colleagues rejected an extremely reasonable offer yesterday. It would have cleared the remaining appropriation bills, which had received bipartisan support in committee, and provided an additional \$1 billion to tackle a variety of urgent border security priorities.

I am sorry that my Democratic colleagues couldn't put their partisanship aside and show the same good faith and flexibility that the President has shown in order to provide the resources our Nation needs to secure the integrity of our borders as well as the safety of American families, but this seems to be the reality of our political moment. It seems like political spite, for the President may be winning out over sensible policy—even sensible policies that are more modest than border security allocations that many Democrats themselves have supported in the very recent past.

Faced with this intransigence—with Democrats' failure to take our borders seriously—Republicans will continue to fulfill our duty to govern. That is why we will soon take up a simple measure that will continue government funding into February, so that we can continue this vital debate after the new Congress has convened, because—make no mistake—there will be important unfinished business in front of us, and we owe it to the American people to finally tackle it.

Just last week, U.S. Customs and Border Commissioner Kevin McAleenan told our colleagues on the Judiciary Committee that the United

States faces a border security and humanitarian crisis—a border security and humanitarian crisis.

These are some of the facts. In the past year alone, we saw a 30-percent increase in apprehensions by CBP, including nearly 6,700 apprehensions of individuals with criminal histories and a 50-percent increase in apprehensions of known gang members. We have seen a 75-percent spike in methamphetamine seizures since fiscal 2015. So it is quite obvious that shoring up our borders is an urgent need for our national security—no question about it.

Secure borders are what the American people expect and they deserve. That is why it continues to be a major focus of President Trump and his administration. Already the President's approach to border security is yielding undeniable results. In each of four CBP sectors where physical borders have been improved or expanded—El Paso, Yuma, Tucson, and San Diego—illegal traffic has dropped by at least 90 percent.

While you wouldn't know it from listening to the far-left special interests, this administration's focus on border security actually follows similar commonsense efforts that used to be a bipartisan consensus.

It used to be a bipartisan consensus. In 2006, for example, the Secure Fence Act, which is designed to strengthen physical security measures at the border, received the support of no fewer than 26 of our Democratic colleagues, including the current Democratic leader, along with Senators FEINSTEIN, CARPER, NELSON, STABENOW, WYDEN, and Obama.

In 2010, President Obama signed a bill to increase the CBP's physical presence down at the border. It passed the Senate by unanimous consent, by the way.

So let's not pretend there is some bright-line principle that separates the billions of dollars that our Democratic colleagues were willing and eager to spend on border security in the recent

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



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past and the resources now requested by the President and his team. There is no big difference in principle. There has just been a shift in the political winds on the far left. This is knee-jerk, partisan opposition to the administration's reasonable and flexible requests. This is making political obstruction a higher goal than the integrity of our Nation's borders. Frankly, it is just political spite, and the American people know it when they see it.

So the Senate will continue our work on the remaining bills—the products of much bipartisan hard work and collaboration, and, in the meantime, we will turn to a clean continuing resolution later today so we can make sure we don't end this year the way we began it—with another government shutdown because of the Democrats' allergy to sensible immigration policies. That is what they did at the beginning of the year.

We need the government to remain open for the American people. We need to wrap up our work for this year, and I hope that my Democratic friends return next year ready to join the President, this Senate majority, and the American people in our desire to secure our border.

TRIBUTE TO PAUL RYAN

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, on a completely different matter, from time to time, each of us has indulged in jokes and finger-pointing that sustain the friendly rivalry between the House and the Senate—the Founders' metaphorical teacup and saucer. Make no mistake. I am thankful every day that so many former Representatives see the light and come over to join us in the Upper Chamber, but for the past 3 years, there is no one outside of the Senate with whom I have partnered more closely than the Speaker of the House, PAUL RYAN.

As history will remember, the speakership was far from the destination that the contented Ways and Means chairman had in mind when our friend John Boehner announced his retirement in 2015, but to the great fortune of the entire Republican Party, PAUL had demonstrated over his years in the House the very qualities his conference needed most.

Everyone knew he had uncompromising integrity, seemingly inexhaustible energy, the trust and admiration of his fellow Members, and he had an aspirational message about what we stood for as Republicans. He has reminded our party, as clearly and forcefully as any leader of his generation, about all that our party can and should aspire to be—“not pale pastels,” in Ronald Reagan's timeless words, “but bold colors.” His colleagues knew he had all of these qualities, and we knew it here in the Senate.

While I was far from the most crucial member of the pressure campaign—a draft effort that even roped in the Cardinal Archbishop of New York—I will

admit that I picked up the phone too. I called PAUL and told him exactly what he didn't want to hear—that he was the right man at the right moment. Conveniently, I was about to get on a plane to Iraq at the time. So PAUL didn't have much of an opportunity to push back.

Over the past 3 years, I have had more opportunities than most to see the right man in action. We have met weekly to coordinate the efforts of our majorities and present a united front on behalf of the American people. At times the cohesion between our teams made it feel like we shared one large staff. So I have seen firsthand how much of what we have been able to accomplish this Congress has been due in huge part to PAUL's serious approach and to his principles and his pragmatism alike.

He helped lead the way on last year's comprehensive reform of our Tax Code, turning his decades-long personal mission into a brighter future for millions of American workers and job creators.

He navigated tense funding negotiations with a deep understanding of his Members' concerns and stood firm in support of America's military, helping to deliver the largest year-on-year increase in defense funding in 15 years.

He stayed true to his heart, putting Catholic social teaching into practice and fighting for policies of all shapes and sizes to lift up the most vulnerable among us, from the working poor to the victims of human trafficking.

His tenure as Speaker has proved a perfect capstone to a remarkable career in Congress. Every step of the way, PAUL has shattered myths and stereotypes about what conservative leaders are like.

Through his long list of accomplishments and his personal witness alike, he has demonstrated that faith in American free enterprise and individual liberty are not quaint, outdated ideas but essential and timeless principles.

He has helped prove that right-of-center values are not only the basis for protest movements, as some cynics had liked to suggest, they are also the foundation for governing majorities.

He has shown that our party's ideals and principles do not clash whatsoever with the moral priority we should place on those at the margins of society but rather that those ideas are often the best means to honor that commitment.

Talk about a product of the Jack Kemp coaching tree. It is safe to say the Speaker's cherished mentor would be mighty proud. PAUL's time at the center stage of our Nation's politics has inspired countless Americans, including a new generation of leaders, but speaking personally, more than any one of the accomplishments that I have been proud to work with PAUL to help to secure, I think I will most remember how he has done that job; how energetically and happily the Speaker has poured himself into each task at

hand. No matter if some said it couldn't be done, no matter that he hadn't sought the job in the first place, the happy warrior has been undeterred.

For all this says about PAUL RYAN the Speaker, it says even more about PAUL RYAN the man. He has a big heart and a razor-sharp mind. It doesn't take long to notice either one, and he knows how to lead with both.

He is a man of profound faith and abiding patriotism, and even after 20 years of Washington, he remains a staunch optimist. PAUL is quick to insist that America's brightest days are yet to come and even quicker to back up the sentiment with action.

Working with Speaker RYAN has been among the great joys of my career in the Senate. The Nation is so much better for his leadership, and I am better for his friendship. I am so grateful to PAUL for everything. I wish him, Janna, and their lovely family great happiness in whatever adventures lie ahead.

TRIBUTE TO JOHN CORNYN

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, now I am down to my very last end-of-year tribute to a Member of this body. I offer this one with the very greatest reluctance.

This one isn't occasioned by any retirement. Fortunately, for all of us, Senator JOHN CORNYN isn't going anywhere. He will be right here with us when the 116th Congress convenes in January, but he will no longer be serving as Republican whip. His tenure in this key leadership role is almost complete. So I could not let the week pass without sharing for the official Record—and with all of our colleagues—a small slice of the tremendous gratitude and respect and admiration I feel for the senior Senator from Texas.

JOHN and I were already well acquainted when he took over the whip role 6 years ago in relief of JON KYL, but still, I wasn't sure exactly what our relationship would look like. You never quite know in advance. Everybody is different, but just a few weeks into our partnership as leader and whip, JOHN presented me with a birthday gift that told me at least three things about him.

He framed and autographed a picture of ourselves—just an ordinary, not particularly glamorous shot of the two of us, plus JOHN BARRASSO, probably talking with the press there in the Ohio Clock corridor.

A somewhat unusual gift, I thought. Lesson No. 1: This guy has a sense of humor and good cheer. In this photo, I am kind of standing front and center. Six-foot-one JOHN is standing right behind me, a little out of focus and halfway in the shadow. So there is lesson No. 2: Humility.

Then there was his handwritten message: “Happy birthday, Mitch—I've got your back.” That was lesson No. 3. It spoke for itself and how fortunate I