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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 13, 2018, at 12 p.m.

Senate

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2018

The Senate met at 3 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.

Eternal God, we praise You with all our heart. Through the power of Your love and mercy, we live and move and breathe and have our being. Lord, You are our High Power, our refuge in life's stormy seasons. Inspire our lawmakers to place their trust in You. Lord, lift them above divisions and cynicism as they depend upon the unfolding of Your powerful providence. May they find peace because of Your redemptive love. Remind them that You are faithful to help those who ask You for guidance and strength.

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.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

THE PRESIDENT'S BUDGET

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, today President Trump will put forward his budget request for the next fiscal year. I look forward to reviewing the President's priorities. With a bipartisan funding agreement now in place, Congress and the White House can work together to begin rebuilding our military, improve care for veterans, and tackle other urgent matters, from disaster relief to the fight against drug addiction.

I especially appreciate the President's focus on improving America's infrastructure. The quality of our country's infrastructure affects everything from our long-term economic future to working Americans' everyday routines. As of 2016, nearly 1 in 10 bridges in our Nation is structurally deficient. The average commuter loses 42 hours per year to delays. The average age of our inland waterway locks and dams is over 50 years old. We are intimately familiar with this in Kentucky, where we ship millions of tons of coal, agricultural products, and other cargo on more than 1,900 miles of inland waterways.

The problem runs deeper than dollars and cents. American workers built skyscrapers in less time than our government now spends reviewing—not even building but reviewing—plans for new bridges and stretches of highways. So I am particularly happy that the President is proposing to eliminate regulatory barriers and streamline lengthy and overcomplicated permitting processes.

Historically, infrastructure has been an area of bipartisan cooperation. Our

last three highway bills passed with large bipartisan majorities, averaging more than 80 “yes” votes. So did our last three WRDA bills and our last three FAA bills. I hope we can build on this record and make more bipartisan progress on this subject.

IMMIGRATION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Now on another matter, Mr. President, as I have repeatedly stated, now that there is an agreement on long-term government funding, the Senate will proceed to a fair debate over the DACA issue, border security, and other matters pertaining to the subject of immigration. This process begins in just a few hours. We will vote to proceed to an unrelated, neutral House-passed bill that will serve as the vehicle for any legislation that succeeds here in the Senate. As I have repeated many times, I will ensure that a fair amendment process gives Senators the opportunity to submit proposals for consideration and votes. I hope this body can seize this opportunity and deliver real progress toward securing our border, reforming aspects of our immigration policy, and achieving a resolution for individuals who were brought to our country illegally when they were young.

The American people have heard no shortage of rhetoric on this issue. They have heard many of my colleagues across the aisle insist that this issue requires swift action. Now is the time to back up this talk with the hard work of finding a workable solution. That means finding an agreement which can pass the Senate, pass the

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



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House, and which the President will sign—not just making a point.

A number of my colleagues—Senators GRASSLEY, CORNYN, TILLIS, PERDUE, LANKFORD, COTTON, and ERNST—will introduce a balanced proposal that tries to meet these requirements. I support the President's proposal and my colleagues' legislation to implement it.

The Secure and Succeed Act is fair and addresses both sides' most pressing concerns, conforming to the conditions the President has put forward. It offers a compassionate resolution for 1.8 million illegal immigrants who were brought to the United States as children. In exchange, this solution delivers funding for President Trump's promise to fully secure the border, reforms our approach to extended family chain migration, and reallocates our arbitrary visa lottery into a more sensible, merit-based system.

This legislation is a fair compromise that addresses the stated priorities of all sides. It is our best chance of producing a solution that can actually resolve these matters, which requires that a bill pass the Senate, pass the House, and earn the President's signature. It has my support.

The time for political posturing is behind us. Now we have an opportunity to resolve these issues. I hope we make the most of it.

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.

BROADER OPTIONS FOR AMERICANS ACT—MOTION TO PROCEED

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to H.R. 2579, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 302, H.R. 2579, to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow the premium tax credit with respect to unsubsidized COBRA continuation coverage.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

ADDRESS AT THE MCCONNELL CENTER

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, before I begin, I thank my friend the Republican leader for his gracious invitation to address the McConnell Center at the University of Louisville this morning. I learned today that you don't say, as we say in New York, "Lewey-ville." It is pronounced "Lou-a-ville." It was a great pleasure to speak to hundreds of bright Kentucky students who are interested in the future of this great country. Seeing these kids gives you faith in the future of America despite all the "sturm und drang" we witness here in this city.

It was my distinct pleasure to give the Republican leader a bottle of Brooklyn bourbon as a thank-you for his invitation. I assured him that it was not a challenge to Kentucky's pride but, rather, to suggest that maybe Kentucky and New York were not so different at all. Our craft distilling industry is booming, and we have very good bourbon that is made in no place other than Brooklyn, NY. By the way, as long as it is made in America, it can be called bourbon. I am not sure if it can be called Kentucky bourbon, but it can be called bourbon.

Mr. President, now on to the business of the day. On the heels of passing a significant, bipartisan budget deal, the Senate returns this week to grapple with one of the most contentious of issues—immigration.

Leader MCCONNELL, to his credit, has promised a debate on a neutral bill with an amendment process that will be fair to both sides. Democrats and Republicans are working hard to find a bill to protect the Dreamers and provide border security that will garner 60 votes—no easy task. It is like threading a needle. I am sure we will have the opportunity to vote on a few ways to do it, but the key is to find a consensus bill that is largely acceptable to a significant number of Members in both parties. The purpose here is not to make a point, as the Republican leader just said. That is easy. The purpose is to get something done. That is hard, but it really is so important. It will not be easy, but it is, certainly, achievable.

Democrats are fully committed to protecting Dreamers, and we have long supported effective border security. Many Republicans are in the same boat. The only enemy here is overreach. Now is not the time or the place to reform the entire legal immigration system. Rather, this is the moment for a narrow bill, and every ounce of our energy is going into finding one that can pass.

Just like on the budget, this is an opportunity for the Senate to lead the Nation. Let the same spirit of bipartisanship and compromise that generated the budget deal carry forward this week as we debate the fate of the Dreamers.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND THE PRESIDENT'S BUDGET

Mr. President, on infrastructure, the Trump administration, today, released

its infrastructure plan. Democrats released our own plan over a year ago and have waited just as long to see this plan, because infrastructure is an issue on which we thought we could find some common ground.

Unfortunately, despite a glaring need, the President's proposal would do very little to make our ailing infrastructure better. Instead of proposing direct Federal investments to help all parts of the country, the Trump infrastructure plan relies on private parties or States and localities to put up the lion's share of the money. In turn, those entities would have to either charge local taxpayers new tolls or raise taxes and other fees to pay for the new infrastructure. So a word that describes so much of the President's bill—probably about 80 percent of it—is "Trump tolls."

The Trump infrastructure plan is like a Hollywood facade. It may look real from afar, but, in truth, it is a flat mirage. The Trump plan has the skin of an infrastructure plan, but it lacks the guts. The lack of direct investment would leave out large parts of America, particularly rural America, where local governments don't have the money or the traffic to attract private sector investment. Small towns and cities throughout the heartland have waited too long for upgrades to their schools, roads, and water systems, as well as access to high-speed internet.

Just as Franklin Roosevelt said that every rural home should have electricity in the 1930s, Democrats believe every rural home should have access to high-speed internet in the 21st century. Roosevelt called for the REA in the 1930s, and soon enough—it took a lot—every rural home had electricity.

We Democrats are calling for the 21st century version of Roosevelt's vision. Every rural home should have access to high-speed internet, and that ought to be one of our goals in the 21st century. Very little could do more to revitalize rural America than that plan, which, by the way, we got a start on in our budget because we Democrats insisted on a certain amount of money being allocated for that. It was not enough to get the job done, but it was a start.

The administration's infrastructure would also result in tolls—Trump tolls—across America. Wealthy investors and large banks will only invest in projects that generate a profit. How do they get the profit? They charge middle-class Americans hundreds of dollars a year in tolls. In fact, it is written into page 20 in the plan. Page 20 of the Trump infrastructure proposal has a section entitled "Providing States Tolling Flexibility." So the middle class need not ask for whom this bill tolls; it tolls for thee.

The middle class is already struggling with the ever-rising costs of healthcare, childcare, college tuition, and prescription drugs. They don't need higher local taxes. They don't need Trump tolls on top of all of that. This is the kind of plan that you would