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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. GRASSLEY).

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Our Father in Heaven, we praise You for the greatness of Your faithfulness. Faithfully guide our lawmakers along the path that leads away from pride, providing them with the humility that comes with wisdom. Lord, help them to remember that in the multitude of counselors, there is safety. May this knowledge prompt them to be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger. Open their hearts to Your love, their minds to Your truth, and their desires to Your guidance. Replenish them daily with Your grace and power.

We pray in Your sovereign 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 (Mrs. HYDE-SMITH). The majority leader is recognized.

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—H.R. 1 AND H.R. 1617

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I understand there are two bills at the desk due for a second reading en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read the bills by title for the second time.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 1) to expand Americans' access to the ballot box, reduce the influence of big money in politics, and strengthen ethics rules for public servants, and for other purposes.

A bill (H.R. 1617) to direct the Director of National Intelligence to submit intelligence assessments of the intentions of the political leadership of the Russian Federation, and for other purposes.

Mr. MCCONNELL. In order to place the bills on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I object to further proceedings en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection having been heard, the bills will be placed on the calendar.

DECLARATION OF NATIONAL EMERGENCY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, later today, the Senate will vote on a resolution related to the state of emergency the President has declared on our southern border. Let me first say, I support the President's decision. So I will vote today to uphold it and reject this resolution of disapproval.

I want to begin where this whole discussion should begin—beyond all the partisan rhetoric and denials of reality we see from our friends across the aisle, just the facts of the matter, and the facts are not at all ambiguous. There is a clear border security and humanitarian crisis on the southern border of the United States of America.

It was only last week that the President's top officials in the matter—Secretary Nielsen and CBP Commissioner McAleenan—each came before Congress to once again lay all this out.

The man charged with protecting our Nation's borders didn't mince words ahead of last week's hearing. This is what he had to say: "The system is well beyond capacity, and remains at the breaking point."

The system is well beyond capacity and remains at the breaking point. The Commissioner pointed out to our colleagues on the Judiciary Committee

that the 76,000 attempted illegal crossings documented in February marked an 11-year high for that month, and, based on CBP projections, by the middle of this month—tomorrow—apprehensions for fiscal year 2019 will already be twice what they were in all of fiscal year 2017.

In front of the House Homeland Security Committee, the Secretary of Homeland Security elaborated by saying the following: "Our capacity is already severely strained, but these increases will overwhelm the system completely."

This is one of the President's senior advisers—a Cabinet Secretary—and she is telling Members of Congress that the current situation is very much a crisis, one that requires immediate action.

Over the past 5 years, CBP has recorded a 620-percent increase in apprehensions of family units at the U.S.-Mexico border. Last year's figure marked an alltime high.

Research suggests upward of 30 percent of women apprehended at the border report experiencing sexual assault during the journeys. Lately, a daily average of 56 individuals taken into CBP custody have required emergency medical care.

The men and women of the Border Patrol are great. They are well trained, they are highly skilled, and they volunteered for a very challenging job, but today they are facing challenges they are not fully equipped to overcome.

It is no secret I take the Senate as an institution extremely seriously. I take the separation of powers extremely seriously. I take Congress's prerogative over appropriations extremely seriously, but—as I argued yesterday in the context of the Yemen resolution—the Senate should not be in the business of misusing specific resolutions to express opinions on more general matters.

President Trump has not invoked some vague article II authority or simply swept aside existing law, as President Obama did to establish his DACA

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



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policy. He has simply operated within existing law—the National Emergencies Act of 1976—to invoke a narrow set of authorities to reprogram a narrow set of funds.

If Congress has grown uneasy with this new law, as many have, then we should amend it. If the 116th Congress regrets the degree of flexibility the 94th Congress gave the Executive, the 116th Congress has the ability to do something about it. I have suggested to the chair of the Homeland Security Committee that they examine how the law can be updated to reflect these concerns. I hope they can report bipartisan solutions through the regular order that the full Senate can actually take up.

Let's not lose sight of the particular question that is before us later today, whether the facts tell us there is truly a humanitarian and security crisis on our southern border and whether the Senate, for some reason, feels this particular emergency on our own border does not rise to the level of the 31 other national emergencies which are currently in effect.

In my own view, these narrow questions are not especially difficult ones to answer. The President is operating within existing law, and the crisis on our border is all too real. So I will vote to support the President's decision later today, and I encourage our colleagues to do the same.

TRIBUTE TO "STEW"

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, on a completely different matter, few of us can aspire to the fame and fortune that are signified when a celebrity is known by just one name.

There is Cher; there was Prince; there is Madonna; and there is "Stew." Everybody knows Stew—not Don Stewart, certainly not Don, just Stew.

For more than 12 years, Stew has been the larger-than-life personality patrolling the Ohio Clock corridor, camping out in the Press Gallery, and prowling the hallways of the Capitol complex—the guy who knows everything about policy, procedure, and communications with the office just off the Senate floor.

Stew is one of the best known staff members in all of Congress. It has been my great fortune to lean heavily on him every single day for more than a decade as my communications director and deputy chief of staff.

So, you can imagine, it is proving difficult to grasp that today is the very last workday I will have Stew by my side. After serving so well for so long, he is taking a leave—shall we say—for greener pastures.

So, this morning, I am exacting a little revenge. I am doing the one thing I suspect will make my deputy chief of staff's stomach churn more than anything else. I am actually turning the spotlight on him.

Now, the complete "Legend of Stew" is somewhat of a winding tale. This

scrappy son of Riverside, CA, did not stroll a typical path to the corridors of power.

What came after high school was work, including what I understand was a spell as a bouncer. I am certain that position offered no useful preparation at all for wrangling our distinguished friends in the press corps. Then came Army service, then back to school in Georgia, and then politics.

Our late colleague Senator Coverdell hired Stew to represent him with his constituents down in Georgia. Not long after, he asked him to relocate to Washington.

The way I understand it, the ink was barely dry on Stew's lease, and the unpacking had just started when his boss tragically passed away, but Stew landed on his feet. He found his way to a pair of tough Texans, handling press for Senator Phil Gramm and then Senator CORNYN. He became famous as the communications director who could outsmart everybody and outwork everybody in a town where it is very hard to do either.

That is where Stew caught my eye. As I prepared, in 2006, for the possibility of becoming Republican leader, I knew we would need the most sophisticated communications shop a Senate leader had ever constructed, and it was clear Stew was the guy to build it.

Something else quickly became clear too. Stew was not quite like anybody else any of us had ever met before. One former colleague recalls that Stew would end a phone call with a plan already formed in his mind, then push off his desk with both hands, sending his rolling chair rocketing backward and slamming into the wall behind him. That high-octane crash was the official notification that Stew was about to make something happen. "It was really endearing," this colleague explained, "in retrospect."

Restless energy has always been Stew's calling card. Every news story, every request from reporters, every shift in public sentiment, Stew was literally on top of it all. Seven days a week, almost literally 24 hours a day.

I was recently reminded that, in Stew's early days with me, some around the Capitol questioned whether he was an actual person or some kind of automated email system our office had built to blast out memos and bulletins literally around the clock.

The instant mobile devices started to provide email alerts, Stew's bat-like sleeping habits and inexhaustible work ethic probably rendered half the alarm clocks in Washington completely obsolete.

Questions, answers, press clippings, battle plans, they would pour into inboxes until after midnight, pause for a couple of hours, and resume before anyone else had even woken up, but circadian rhythms weren't the only thing Stew's presence reprogrammed. His energy, his careful foresight, his patriotism, all these things were just as infectious.

As our chief spokesman, key strategist, close adviser, team leader, morale-builder, resident dog lover, heavy metal music aficionado, and happy warrior, Stew helped me in my office through the Iraq war, the financial crisis, seismic policy battles, nomination debates, three different Presidents, and two reelection campaigns.

No matter what the day brought, I always knew what my deputy chief of staff would bring—razor-sharp instincts, a level head, a steady hand, and a boatload of integrity. For more than 12 years, I entrusted Stew with my words, my goals, and my reputation, and he has never let me down. He never flagged. He never slowed. Our watchdog never lost a step. He is totally trustworthy, completely reliable, and unbelievably competent—the greatest luxury a leader could have.

With these characteristics, you might think the person I am describing could be a little stiff, a little stern. Maybe that energy would occasionally boil over into harsh words or heated moments. But, remember, Stew is a bit of an unusual guy. That intensity doesn't overflow into frustration or unkindness or sharp words; instead, it overflows into generosity, good-heartedness, and compassion.

Stew is famous around Washington for his encyclopedic memory of birthdays, kids' birthdays, and anniversaries. Like clockwork, notes and greeting cards arrive, and texts and emails roll in. What I am saying is that work challenges aren't the only thing Stew is good at keeping in perspective. I was reminded of that fact a few months back when Stew brought his mother, Nancy, to visit here in the Senate. For all the history Stew has helped make, for every victory when he has allowed himself a brief smile, his colleagues aren't sure they have ever seen him happier than when he was ushering his mom around the corridors and showing her all he has built.

For all Stew's own accomplishments, we aren't sure we have ever seen him prouder than when he brags on his daughter Kylie. Lately, that has meant her career in software engineering and the apps she has created. Stew loves his family. He is loyal to his family. It is just our good luck that he came to see the Senate as part of that family as well.

My former chief of staff reminded me of the day he brought his boys to work. Stew loves kids, so he made a beeline, but one son felt a little shy. Instead of shrugging and walking away, it somehow occurred to Stew to say this: "Did you know I could do a standing jump right onto that table right there?" One more time for good measure—he is kind of a unique individual. The boy was understandably perplexed, but then this friendly stranger crouched down and leapt right up onto the table, with tie, dress shoes, and everything—a total spectacle, just to put that young man at ease and coax a smile. That is not your typical Senate moment, but that is the thing—for me and