



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 116th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 165

WASHINGTON, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10, 2019

No. 62

Senate

The Senate met at 9:45 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable MARSHA BLACKBURN, a Senator from the State of Tennessee.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

God of grace and glory, we bless Your Holy Name. Give us a hunger and thirst for Your righteousness. Lord, we confess that we often fall short of Your high standards for living. Create in us clean hearts, O God, and renew a right spirit within us. Continue to bless our Senators. Give them the fulfillment that comes from knowing they are doing Your will. Protect them from dangers as You guide them through the myriad challenges they must face to keep this Nation strong. Work through them to fulfill Your purposes for our Nation and world.

We pray in Your Holy 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. GRASSLEY).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, April 10, 2019.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable MARSHA BLACKBURN, a

Senator from the State of Tennessee, to perform the duties of the Chair.

CHUCK GRASSLEY,
President pro tempore.

Mrs. BLACKBURN thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak to the Senate for 1 minute as in morning business.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CLINTON INVESTIGATION

Mr. GRASSLEY. On Monday, I spoke about the Clinton investigation, and I want to reiterate one very serious issue. The FBI apparently had highly classified information potentially relevant to the Clinton investigation in its possession.

The FBI drafted a memo in May of 2016 to get access to the information. That memo said review of the information was necessary to complete the investigation. Sadly, that memo was never sent.

How could the FBI finish the investigation of the Clintons if they never got access to all of the potentially relevant information?

Congress needs to know what happened in that instance.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—H.R. 1585

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I understand there is a bill at the desk due a second reading.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will read the bill by title for the second time.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 1585) to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act of 1994, and for other purposes.

Mr. McCONNELL. In order to place the bill on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I object to further proceedings.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection having been heard, the bill will be placed on the calendar.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, the Senate continues to build on last week's progress in restoring our normal tradition regarding lower level nominations. We are moving several well-qualified nominees more promptly through floor consideration. We are clearing the considerable backlog of those who had been mired for months in our Democratic colleagues' across-the-board obstruction campaign.

Make no mistake, there is still a very long way to go. There are still too many vacancies on the President's team. There are still too many would-be public servants waiting for partisan barriers to fall. But this body should be proud of the progress we are already making and the healthier precedent we are setting for the future.

Yesterday the Senate voted to confirm both Daniel Domenico, the President's choice to serve as U.S. District Judge for the District of Colorado, and Patrick Wyrick to be a district judge in the Western District of Oklahoma.

Today we will turn our attention to Cheryl Stanton's nomination to lead the Labor Department's Wage and Hour Division. It has been 1 year, 7 months, and 5 days since Ms. Stanton's nomination arrived in the Senate. In that time the nomination has been favorably reported by the HELP Committee not once, not twice, but three

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



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times—three times through committee for this graduate of Williams College and the University of Chicago Law School and two times sent back to the President for the former executive director of the South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce. Well, hopefully the third time will be the charm, and we can finally do the prudent thing on the Senate floor. I hope each of my colleagues will join me in support of the Stanton nomination later this week.

Later this week, as I noted yesterday, we will finish with the nomination of David Bernhardt to join President Trump's Cabinet as Secretary of the Interior. Speaking of procedures coming in threes, this would be the third time Mr. Bernhardt will have been confirmed by the Senate. He served previously as the Department's Solicitor and as its Deputy Secretary. According to the American Farm Bureau Federation, his "proven leadership" in these roles "has helped restore the multiple use of America's public lands."

They are not alone. Over his tenure, Mr. Bernhardt developed a reputation among sportsmen, conservation groups, and western Native American Tribes as a strong leader and partner in their efforts. So once again, I hope each of my colleagues will join me in voting to confirm David Bernhardt later this week.

MEDICARE

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, on a completely different matter, for some time now, my colleagues and I have been speaking out about the Democrats' parade of fantastical new proposals—plans to spend unprecedented sums of Americans' money in order to seize unprecedented control over Americans' lives.

Just a few weeks ago, the Senate voted on the so-called Green New Deal. It was Washington Democrats' plan to power down the U.S. economy and have the Federal Government intrude on basically every economic transaction and personal life choice in radically unprecedented ways. The specifics of the proposal, limited as they were, painted enough of a picture for outside experts to roughly estimate the price tag at as much as \$93 trillion, which is more money than the Federal Government has spent in its entire history, in exchange for the systematic dismantling of American prosperity.

It advocated for the abolition of the most affordable and plentiful domestic energy resources available to American families and a hog-tied American economy that our competitors would leave in the dust.

So it should come as no surprise that for the sequel we see and hear that Senate Democrats may soon officially introduce their proposed Washington, DC, takeover of health insurance—the plan I call "Medicare for None."

It is a fitting name for a proposal that would gut the Medicare Program

as American seniors know it, reuse the label on a new, government-run, one-size-fits-all arrangement, and remove 180 million Americans from the private insurance they have chosen in order to funnel them into a system without choice.

What is especially ironic is that my Democratic colleagues are choosing to agitate for this pivot toward socialism during this particularly important economic period—at this particular moment, with more job openings than Americans looking for work for the first time since recordkeeping started, when we have seen unemployment reach a 49-year low and wages growing faster than they have in a decade. It is the kind of economy where a single mom in Mississippi says: "It's amazing that I'm getting paid almost \$20 an hour to learn how to weld."

It is the kind of economy where garage door installers in Nevada say they are literally afraid to let potential new hires walk out the door because American workers are in such high demand.

Let's remember that this transformation is being helped along by Senate Republican ideas and policies that are the polar opposite—totally opposite—of what our Democratic friends are now calling for.

Here is how Republican pro-growth and pro-opportunity policies helped us get where we are: by encouraging job creators to invest here at home instead of penalizing success; by recognizing that working families know best how to spend their paychecks, not Washington; and by creating conditions for an economic surge that touches every corner of our country.

Now all of America is reaping the benefits. This isn't like the last administration, where 75 percent of new jobs and 90 percent of the population growth flowed into the very largest metropolitan areas. This time it is an all-American comeback, and all kinds of communities are benefiting from more jobs, more opportunities, and more growth in pay.

Monday is tax day. It is not exactly a time many of us look forward to, but this year marks the first time Americans are filing under the new Republican tax reform law that has helped them keep more of their paychecks and has helped to create the outstanding economy we see today. Democrats may be working overtime to bring this bright chapter to an end, but over here, on this side of the aisle, we will keep making sure that this is still just the beginning of these brighter days for the American people.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Resumed

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Cheryl Marie Stanton, of South Carolina, to be Administrator of the Wage and Hour Division, Department of Labor.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CRAMER). Without objection, it is so ordered.

NOMINATION OF JOHN P. ABIZAID

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I rise in strong support of General Abizaid's confirmation to be our Ambassador to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It took this administration nearly 2 years to even nominate someone to this critical position, and, unfortunately, we have seen the results of the absence of serious, experienced U.S. leadership.

I was pleased that the Senate Foreign Relations Committee expeditiously moved his nomination. In the past 2 years, we have seen Saudi leadership take actions that have seriously strained the U.S.-Saudi relationship and that have run fundamentally counter to basic international norms.

Saudi Arabia has detained and reportedly tortured members of its own royal family and has effectively abducted the Lebanese Prime Minister. In Yemen, the Crown Prince's coalition has led an offensive that has been responsible not just for breeding the world's worst humanitarian crisis but also for potentially opening the door to more malign Iranian influence. To this day, we still also seek accountability for the brutal murder of American resident and journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

With the White House's having conducted freelance diplomacy, the American people have had little faith that there has been serious pressure on the Saudi leadership for it to correct course. Worse, we continue to learn that the administration appears to be rewarding the Kingdom with secret side deals in support of its nuclear program—far outside the scope of legally prescribed processes.

Amidst all of this, we must find a way to get the U.S.-Saudi relationship back on course, for we do continue to share some common challenges and interests. Yet U.S. alliances are strongest with partners with whom we share values and with whom we can have honest conversations.