



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 116th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 165

WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, MAY 9, 2019

No. 77

Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable THOM TILLIS, a Senator from the State of North Carolina.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal Spirit, the center of our joy, guide and bless our lawmakers. Inspire their minds; assist their wills; and strengthen their hands that they may not falter or fail. Do for them more than they can ask or imagine as You continue to use them as instruments for Your glory. Lord, give to all who labor in this Chamber the wisdom, humility, and competence sufficient for this day. May the words of their mouths and the meditations of their hearts be acceptable to You, O God, our rock and our redeemer.

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, May 9, 2019.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable THOM TILLIS, a Sen-

ator from the State of North Carolina, to perform the duties of the Chair.

CHUCK GRASSLEY,
President pro tempore.

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

NOMINATIONS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, the Senate has continued to make significant progress in the personnel business. After 2 years of systematic heel-dragging from our friends across the aisle, even on the least controversial nominations, the modest reform the Senate adopted last month is helping us to get back on track.

Another slate of capable nominees is now on its way to work for the American people. They are precisely the same sort of unobjectionable sub-Cabinet nominees who, until very recently, would have been subjected to 30 hours of debate. They would have tied up the floor for days before being confirmed anyway. They are perfect examples of why the Senate returned to our longstanding norms of processing lower level nominations. Now the American people are getting the government they elected at a more reasonable pace.

To be clear, the silly partisan games haven't all been cleared away from our work on nominations. For example, just yesterday, we confirmed Judge Joseph Bianco to serve on the Second Circuit by a relatively close vote of 54 to 42. Remember, for a judge, in the scope of Senate history, that counts as a close shave. So are we looking at a controversial person? Are we looking at an individual whom the Senators agonized over and painstakingly studied?

Judge Bianco brings a unanimous "well-qualified" rating from the ABA,

and he has already served as a judge for 13 years in the Eastern District of New York. Oh, by the way, he was confirmed to that position by a voice vote. In fact, back then in 2005, one of Mr. Bianco's most vocal supporters in the Senate was none other than our friend the Democratic leader. Here is how he praised his New Yorker to the Judiciary Committee in 2005.

Senator SCHUMER said: "I am proud to support someone as outstandingly qualified and well respected as Mr. Bianco."

Well, that was then and this is now.

The nominee is the same. Actually, he is not quite the same because now he has been a very highly regarded district judge for 13 years, so this nominee is actually even better. Yet the occupant of the White House is different. In this political moment, as we know, my Democratic colleagues' commitment to the "outrage industrial complex" seems to crowd out reasonable judgment.

So now, this week, the Democratic leader lumped the same individual he used to champion into what he described as "hard-right nominees." Then the Democratic leader and almost every other Member of his conference proceeded to vote against him. He voted against the same nominee he praised in such generous terms before.

I can only conclude that now the "outrage industrial complex" comes first, not the facts, not the nominee's qualifications. The "outrage industrial complex" comes first. The individual whom the Democratic leader used to champion and who passed by a voice vote in 2005 now receives this partisan treatment. What was once a routine matter for acclamation becomes a party-line vote just because this President is the one who nominated him.

Look, fortunately, at the end of the day, the outcome is the same. Judge Joseph Bianco, along with a slate of other well-qualified nominees, is now on the job, and the Republicans will

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



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continue our work to give the people the government they chose, the government they deserve.

ECONOMIC GROWTH

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, on another matter, as I mentioned, we are in the middle of a historic economic moment for the American people.

Last week, the nationwide unemployment rate fell to its lowest level since December of 1969. In just the year and a half since the Republicans passed comprehensive tax reform, 19 States have set new alltime lows in their unemployment rates, including in the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

If you compare today to November 2016, there are now nearly 70 percent more job openings in durable goods manufacturing and more than twice as many job openings in construction. We are talking about hundreds of thousands of new job openings in these sectors alone.

Overall, under the Republicans' policies of the last 2 years, for the first time in recorded history, the number of job openings across the country has surpassed the number of Americans who are looking for work. Think about that. There is more than one job opening for every American who wants a job.

So this economic moment, helped along by Republican policies, has placed American workers in much higher demand, and we know what happens when American workers are in high demand—they get paid more. Sure enough, from late 2017 to late 2018, wage growth for U.S. workers logged its fastest full-year growth rate in a decade.

What is more, the New York Times reported:

The recent gains are going to those who need it most. Over the past year, low-wage workers have experienced the fastest pay increases, a shift from earlier in the recovery, when wage growth was concentrated at the top.

Of course, that phrase “earlier in the recovery” is code for during the Obama administration.

How often do we hear the left invoke the stale talking point that pro-growth policies only help wealthy people? Anyone who has cracked open a history book knows it is absurd to say that American free enterprise only helps wealthy people and that State-controlled socialism helps everyone else. Anyone who has picked up a newspaper in the last year and a half knows it as well.

Capitalism and free enterprise are the best tools humanity has ever discovered for lifting up the vulnerable and for empowering people. It was true in the 19th century; it was true in the 20th century; and it is still proving to be true in 2019.

It has been on the Republicans' watch that we have actually seen low-wage workers and nonmanagement workers receive the fastest wage

growth. It has been on the Republicans' watch that the unemployment rate specifically for Americans without high school diplomas has fallen to its lowest rate since 1992. It has been on the Republicans' watch that newspapers have described “a wave of disabled Americans” who have been able to join or return to the workforce.

My Republican colleagues and I could not be more proud of the conditions our policies have helped to create for all kinds of American workers and their families, and we will continue to defend these gains, to put pro-growth, pro-opportunity reforms in place, and to stand up against the far-left grab bag of socialist ideas that would threaten America's progress.

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.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. HYDE-SMITH). The Senator from Montana.

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

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

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Michael H. Park, of New York, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Second Circuit.

ABORTION

Mr. DAINES. Madam President, a few weeks ago, I stood right here condemning Virginia Governor Ralph Northam's chilling remarks about infanticide. Since then, the American people have continued to witness disturbing abortion extremism by Democratic public lawmakers. So here I am again today to condemn and address these horrific remarks and the unfortunate reality we are living in today in this country.

Last week, while opposing a bill to protect unborn human life, Democratic Alabama State Representative John Rogers said: “Some kids are unwanted, so you kill them now or you kill them later.” He went on to say: “You bring them in the world unwanted, unloved, you send them to the electric chair. So you kill them now or you kill them later.”

These reprehensible remarks reveal a disturbing abortion extremism that has become far too normal, too accepted by the Democrats. All human life is precious, no matter the stage of development or disability. We must never forget these are innocent babies we are talking about.

Just this week, Democratic Pennsylvania State Representative Brian Sims posted a disgraceful video of himself online—I encourage you to go and watch it—a disgraceful video of himself online harassing three teenage girls who were praying outside a Planned Parenthood abortion clinic. He went as far as promising to pay \$100 to anyone who would identify these innocent teenage girls.

Horrific comments like Representative Rogers' and harassment of pro-life teens by Representative Sims should be condemned at the State and the national level by all, regardless of political party. We must not let this continue to be the norm in our society. We must fight back.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate Democratic leader is recognized.

GUN VIOLENCE

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, on Tuesday afternoon, our country suffered another shooting—this time in Highlands Ranch, CO. It was the second shooting of the week following a weekend where at least 19 people were shot in Baltimore, 16 in St. Louis, and 28 in Chicago.

My grandson is less than a year old. He turned over in his crib last night—great accomplishment. But on a serious note, I don't want him to live in a world where this is the norm. I don't want him to see this on TV every other week. I don't want him to come home after school to tell his parents about learning to hide under a desk with the lights off. I don't want him to grow up in a country where children and adolescents are more than 20 times more likely to be killed with guns than their peers in other high-income countries.

I want him—little Noah and every other child in America—to live in a world where America's gun violence epidemic is a thing of the past. It may seem a naive thought in a cynical time, but I believe we can get there. We can take steps right now to make these incidents less likely. Nothing will prevent them, but there are lots of things we can do to make them a lot less frequent. A few months ago, the House did just that. The House passed legislation to close the loopholes in Federal background checks—something that more than 90 percent of all Americans support.

No one here pretends that we can prevent every incident, but we have a choice to face between moving in the right direction in a significant way and doing nothing. That is why I am so disappointed once again that Leader MCCONNELL and the Republican majority have turned this Chamber into a