



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 116th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 165

WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, JUNE 27, 2019

No. 109

Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 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.

Eternal Lord, the center of our joy, we come to You, drawn by Your unconditional love. Lord, give us reverential awe as You open our eyes to see Your power and majesty.

Help our lawmakers become aware of Your presence, giving them Your peace and illuminating their paths. May they rejoice because You are their refuge. Lord, bless their families, surrounding them with the shield of Your favor. Draw our Senators close to You and to one another in humility and service.

And, Lord, we thank You for the faithfulness of the 2019 U.S. Senate summer pages as they prepare to leave us. We pray that You would bless and keep them. 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.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. TILLIS). The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for 90 seconds as in morning business.

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

ALZHEIMER'S AND BRAIN AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, June is Alzheimer's and Brain Awareness Month.

It is important to recognize the impact Alzheimer's has on families in

Iowa and across the country and to recognize the cost to taxpayers because of the care it takes in the last years of their lives. This disease robs Americans of their memories and impacts their ability to speak, pay attention, and exercise judgment.

The best way for Congress to help with Alzheimer's disease is to ensure adequate research funding to find treatments. As Congress considers appropriations for next year, we should continue to fund research and work toward curing this disease.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, on another point, the Supreme Court made a decision this week that I very much disagree with. I am an advocate for the Freedom of Information Act and for the public's business being public, and this Supreme Court decision inhibited that.

In a self-governed society, the people ought to know what their government is up to. Transparency laws, like the Freedom of Information Act, help to provide access to information in the face of an opaque and obstinate government. Unfortunately, a recent Supreme Court ruling and new regulations at the EPA and the Department of the Interior are undermining access to there being public information.

In other words, the public's business ought to be public. So I am working on legislation to address these developments and to promote access to government records. Americans deserve an accountable government, and transparency leads to accountability.

TRIBUTE TO NICK NURSE

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, on a little lighter note, I am proud to say that the NBA season concluded with a University of Northern Iowa graduate's being able to call himself a champion.

The Toronto Raptors' head coach, Nick Nurse, graduated from my alma

mater. He played for the University of Northern Iowa Panthers from 1985 to 1989. Nick went on to coach numerous teams, including for Grand View University in Des Moines. Nick knows how to reignite hometown pride. He led the first and only boys' Class 3-A championship for Kuemper Catholic High School in Carroll, IA. He is a class act. Congratulations to Nick.

I yield the floor.

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. McCONNELL. 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 MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, 8 weeks ago, the administration sent Congress an urgent request for humanitarian money for the border. For 8 weeks, we have seen evidence nearly every day that the conditions have been getting worse. Yet, during all of this time, our Democratic House colleagues have been unable to produce a clean measure to provide this humanitarian funding with its having any chance of becoming law.

The proposal they finally passed this week was way to the left of the mainstream. The President made it clear it would earn a veto, not a signature. Even so, in an abundance of fairness, the Senate voted on Speaker PELOSI's effort—poison pill riders and all. It earned just 37 votes. The House proposal earned 37 votes here. Fortunately, we do have a chance to make

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



Printed on recycled paper.

law this week on a hugely bipartisan basis.

The Senate advanced a clean, simple humanitarian funding bill yesterday by a huge margin. Thanks to Chairman SHELBY and Senator LEAHY, this bipartisan package sailed through the Appropriations Committee 30 to 1, and it passed the full Senate yesterday—now listen to this—84 to 8. We sent that clean bill over to the House by a vote of 84 to 8. The Shelby-Leahy legislation has unified the Appropriations Committee, and it has unified the Senate. The administration would sign it into law.

So all that our House colleagues need to do to help the men, women, and children on the border this week is to pass this unifying bipartisan bill and send it to the President. For weeks, we have heard our House Democratic colleagues speaking a lot about the poor conditions, the overstretched facilities, the insufficient supplies. Our bill gives them the chance today to actually do something about it.

Now, I understand that instead of moving forward with this bipartisan bill, the Speaker is signaling she may choose to drag out the process even more and might persist in some variety of the leftwing demands that caused the House bill to fail dramatically in the Senate yesterday. I understand that some of the further changes the House Democrats are discussing may be unobjectionable things the Trump administration may be able to help to secure for them administratively.

Yet it is crystal clear that some of these new demands would drag this bipartisan bill way back to the left and jeopardize the Shelby-Leahy consensus product that unified the Senate and that is so close to becoming law—this close.

For example, I understand that the House Democrats may ask the Speaker to insist on—listen to this—cutting the supplemental funding for Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the Department of Defense. In the middle of this historic surge on the border, they want to claw back some of this badly needed money from the men and women who are down there on the frontlines. It looks like these cuts would represent pay cuts to ICE staff, including pay that people have already earned, and cuts to the money for investigating child trafficking.

Chairman SHELBY and Senator LEAHY have already reached a bipartisan agreement. Both sides have already compromised. We are standing at the 5-yard line. Yet, apparently, some in the House want to dig back into that “abolish ICE” playbook and throw a far-left partisan wrench into the whole thing.

Let me be perfectly clear. I am glad the Speaker and the administration are discussing some of these outstanding issues, but if the House Democrats send the Senate back some partisan effort to disrupt our bipartisan progress, we will simply move to table it. The U.S.

Senate is not going to pass a border funding bill that will cut the money for ICE and the Department of Defense. It is not going to happen. We already have our compromise. The Shelby-Leahy Senate bill is the only game in town. It is time to quit playing games. It is time to make it law.

I urge my colleagues across the Capitol to take up the clean, bipartisan bill that the Senate passed 84 to 8 and, without any more unnecessary delays, send it on to President Trump for his signature.

TOBACCO-FREE YOUTH ACT

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, on another matter, just last month, I introduced legislation, along with my colleague from Virginia, Senator KAINES, to address a serious and growing public health issue. As Senator KAINES and I laid out in May, the growing popularity and accessibility of tobacco products like e-cigarettes and vapor products are endangering America’s youth.

The CDC estimates that in 2018 youth e-cigarette use in America increased by 1.5 million. So we introduced legislation that would accomplish something very important—raising the minimum age for purchasing tobacco and vapor products to 21 nationwide. We want to put a huge dent in these pathways to childhood addiction and help get these products out of high schools altogether.

Now, as a Virginian and a Kentuckian, neither Senator KAINES nor I lack an appreciation for the history of tobacco in America. For generations, this hugely important cash crop helped to build our States and, indeed, the whole Nation’s early prosperity. Yet new doors are open today to Kentucky’s growers and producers, and parents back home are rightly worried that e-cigarettes and vapor products pose new threats to the young people at a critical stage in their developments.

So I was proud to take the lead on this, and I am proud my colleague from Virginia has joined me in leading this effort to give this cause the strong bipartisan momentum it richly deserves. Our measure cleared an important milestone yesterday. The HELP Committee approved our Tobacco-Free Youth Act and advanced it here, to the floor, along with other legislation.

I thank Chairman ALEXANDER, Ranking Member MURRAY, and all of our colleagues on the committee for including our legislation in this package and advancing it. I look forward to continuing to work with them, with Senator KAINES, and with all of our colleagues as we work to get this important proposal signed into law.

NATIONAL DEFENSE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, on another matter entirely, later today, the Senate will vote to fulfill a solemn

responsibility. For the 59th consecutive year, we will pass the National Defense Authorization Act. I hope and expect we will do it by a wide, bipartisan margin.

It would be difficult to overstate the importance of this legislation to the ongoing missions of our Nation’s men and women in uniform. The NDAA is simultaneously a target to guide the modernization of our all-volunteer force; a supply line to restore readiness and keep U.S. personnel equipped with the most cutting-edge, lethal capabilities; a promise of critical support services to military families; and a declaration to both our allies and adversaries of America’s strategic resolve.

This year’s bill authorizes the investments that will support all these bills and a major pay raise for military personnel to boot.

I am especially proud that it supports the ongoing missions of Kentucky’s installations and the many military families who call my State home.

The NDAA is a product of a robust, bipartisan process that has consumed our colleagues on the Armed Services Committee for weeks. Nearly 300 amendments were adopted during markup. So today, once again, I would like to thank Chairman INHOFE and Ranking Member REED for their leadership throughout this process. They produced legislation that each Member of this body should be proud of. Particularly in these troubled times, this is exactly—exactly—the message the Senate needs to send. I look forward to passing it today.

Passing the NDAA itself is not the only important message the Senate will send this week on national security. On Friday morning, we will vote on a badly ill-conceived amendment that would literally make our Nation less secure and make American servicemembers less safe. I respect my colleagues, but this amendment from Senator UDALL and others is a half-baked and dangerous measure—about as half-baked and dangerous as we have seen on the floor in quite some time. It should be soundly rejected.

We know that our Democratic colleagues have political differences with President Trump—I think the whole country has gotten that message pretty loud and clear—but they have chosen a terrible time and a completely irresponsible manner to express themselves. Rather than work with the President, who shares the goal of avoiding war with Iran, they have gratuitously chosen to make him the enemy.

Let me repeat that. Rather than work with the President to deter our actual enemies, they have chosen to make him the enemy.

At the very moment that Iran has been stepping up its aggression throughout the Middle East, these Senators are proposing radical new restrictions on the administration’s ability to defend U.S. interests and our partners.