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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable CINDY HYDE-SMITH, a Senator from the State of Mississippi.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Almighty God, the author and finisher of our faith, we rejoice in the privileges You have strewn on our path. Give us the courage to use our opportunities to serve You and country. May our lawmakers strive to stand for right though the heavens fall. Remind them that evil prospers when good people do nothing. May our Senators also use the gift of intercessory prayer to unlock Your storehouse of blessings so desperately needed in our Nation and world. In hours of hardship, provide them with Your peace. Lord, give our legislators the wisdom that enables them to hasten the coming of Your Kingdom of justice and peace.

We pray in Your sovereign 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 senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, July 25, 2019.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby

appoint the Honorable CINDY HYDE-SMITH, a Senator from the State of Mississippi, to perform the duties of the Chair.

CHUCK GRASSLEY,
President pro tempore.

Mrs. HYDE-SMITH thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

BUDGET AGREEMENT

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, today we expect the House of Representatives will pass the 2-year government funding agreement the Trump administration and Speaker PELOSI announced earlier this week. I stand with the President, who has publicly expressed his support for the agreement on several occasions. I am grateful to the members of his administration who led the negotiations: Secretary Mnuchin, Acting Chief of Staff Mulvaney, and Acting OMB Director Vought.

Considering the circumstances of divided government, this is a good deal. After the House approves it today with bipartisan support, I expect the Senate to do the same next week. Here is why it is a good deal: It achieves the No. 1 goal on the Republican side of the aisle of providing for the common defense and continuing our progress in rebuilding the Armed Forces of the United States and modernizing them so they can continue to keep Americans safe and project power for years to come. This has been a top shared priority for this Republican Senate and this Republican White House for 2½ years.

Pentagon leaders need stable, reliable, and sufficient resources. The greatest military on Earth should not drift in uncertainty. Our servicemem-

bers deserve better than a string of funding crises and continuing resolutions. Our commanders need predictable resources and sufficient resources to lay the foundations for the future of our national defense.

Servicemembers deserve to deploy armed with state-of-the-art training and cutting-edge equipment; their families deserve the best support services the Nation can offer; and the Nation as a whole deserves the global presence that is up to snuff and competitive with the leaps forward in which our adversaries have invested heavily.

That is why we have delivered historic increases in resources for modernization and DOD reforms—to ensure the U.S. military is strong and agile enough to confront a growing number of threats to America and our interests. That is why just a few months ago we authorized the largest year-on-year increase in defense funding in more than a decade. This funding agreement is the next step forward in that process.

Every Member of this body knows the threats we face are serious and getting more serious: the resurgence of great power competition with nations like Russia and China; the destabilization of influence of state-sponsored terror and regional aggression from bad actors such as Iran; and the testing of historic alliances.

Amidst the growing international chaos, the preeminent obligation of the U.S. government is to provide for the common defense. This agreement prioritizes that commitment to the safety and the security of the American people.

A nation that understands these threats and takes them seriously makes serious investments in the readiness of its own defenses today and the modernization that will preserve their strength into the future.

For years, we have seen China extend its strategic reach, testing the waters of the Indo-Pacific region and beyond.

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



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We have watched its Communist leadership nearly double military spending in the last decade and push the boundaries in everything from offshore territorial claims to 5G technology.

America's edge is in jeopardy. Our allies in the Pacific are uneasy. The administration's budget agreement with the Speaker will allow America to ensure that our own foot stays on the gas pedal as well.

Meanwhile, in the Middle East, we are confronted daily with escalating threats to our allies and interests. State-sponsored terror and proxy actions are becoming bolder. Gray zone activity in places like the Straits of Hormuz is raising the economic and geopolitical stakes of Iran's meddling.

From Syria to Crimea, Russia continues to stretch its legs. Not since the height of the Soviet Union have we seen Moscow this focused on extending influence beyond its borders. All over the world, historic alliances and partnerships like NATO need to be strengthened and renewed for this new landscape.

Fortunately, in the coming days, we will have the opportunity to address all these areas—Europe, the Middle East, the Indo-Pacific, and beyond. That opportunity is this bipartisan spending agreement. So I am grateful to the administration for ensuring that such robust funding for our national security is included in this package. It will make us safer worldwide and make needed investments in our own facilities right here at home, like Fort Knox, Fort Campbell, and the Blue Grass Army Depo, which Kentucky is proud to host.

What is more, I commend the President's team for firmly holding the line on the laundry list of leftwing policy riders that some House Democrats had sought to push throughout their partisan appropriations process over there on the other side.

We are talking about far-left wish list items, things like reversing the Trump administration's decision and getting title X taxpayer dollars flowing back into the pocket of Planned Parenthood, weakening the conscience rights of healthcare professionals, removing protections for the Second Amendment, and efforts that would have weakened ICE and defunded the President's efforts to secure our border.

These are just some of the policy riders the far left had hoped to smuggle into the appropriations process—perhaps using the full faith and credit of the United States as leverage, but the administration froze all of them out. They are not in this deal. They shepherded an agreement that delivers on our most basic responsibility to the American people. They set the stage to provide for the common defense. Today it is the House's turn to follow through, and then, in the near future, it will be ours.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 2258

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

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2258) to provide anti-retaliation protections for antitrust whistleblowers.

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.

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

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

ELECTION SECURITY

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, we all know that yesterday former Special Counsel Mueller testified before two House committees. I believe it was crucial for the American people to hear straight from Robert Mueller's mouth that the President was not—underline “not”—exonerated by his report, despite what the President claims. It is utterly amazing. Mueller says something, and the President says the exact opposite to the media. We have never had a President who has lied so often. He knows what Mueller said, but he thinks he can dupe people when he says it, and I hope it is not true.

It is important for the American people to hear straight from Robert Mueller's mouth that the President is not telling the truth when he claims that Mueller found no obstruction. Mueller did not. Anyone who watched the hearing saw it. It was as plain as could be, but that is not the subject of my remarks today.

My remarks are about election security. Above all, it was important for all of us to hear straight from Robert Mueller's mouth that the threat from Russia and other foreign adversaries seeking to meddle in our elections was very real and still very much ongoing.

When asked about Russian interference in our democracy, Mr. Mueller responded:

It wasn't a single attempt. They're doing it as we sit here. And they expect to do it during the next campaign.

Leader McCONNELL, let me read you those sentences, if you care about America. Mueller said about Russian interference:

It wasn't a single attempt. They're doing it as we sit here. And they expect to do it during the next campaign.

He went on to say that many more countries were developing capabilities similar to what Russia has. He reminded members of the House Intelligence Committee that Russian fake images reached nearly 126 million people on Facebook alone.

As if it even needed to be spelled out, Mr. Mueller added: “Much more needs to be done in order to protect against these intrusions, not just by the Russians but by others as well.”

Mueller's testimony was a clarion call for election security. Mueller's testimony should be a wake-up call to every American—Democrat, Republican, liberal, and conservative—that the integrity of our elections is at stake and to be manipulated by a foreign power.

This is all about the future of this country. If we lose faith in our electoral process, democracy begins to walk away from us, and we will be a different country than the glorious country we have been since 1789. Yet our Republican colleagues put their heads in the sand.

Donald Trump, as usual, with his enormous self-ego, doesn't want to admit the Russians interfered—even though he encouraged it publicly—because he feels it will cast some illegitimacy on his election. The election is over. He is President. I wish he weren't. But that is not the issue here.

The issue is the future of our democracy. And our Republican colleagues, who, once again, either are afraid of President Trump or, even worse, seeking advantage from Russian interference, are keeping their heads in the sand.

We have tried. We have worked with our Republican colleagues to craft several bipartisan bills—Democrats and Republicans alike—to safeguard our election infrastructure and deter any foreign adversary from targeting our democracy in 2020. We have asked the Republican majority on the Appropriations Committee to devote more resources to harden their election systems but to no avail.

Leader McCONNELL has refused to bring these bills to the floor. Republicans have rebuffed our request for additional appropriations this year. Election security goes into McCONNELL's legislative graveyard, even though it should be the most nonpartisan of issues.

He has refused—refused—to let us consider anything, using his power as majority leader. And he is backed up by every single Republican who is complicit in not stopping the Russians, as Putin seeks to stretch his long arm and delve into the sacred process of how we elect our officials.

What could possibly be the downside of ensuring our elections are fair and