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Senate

The Senate met at 3 p.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 God, Your truth endures forever. Make us conscious of our shortcomings, limitations, and liabilities.

Lord, guide our lawmakers. Give them the humility to depend on Your leading and to receive the gift of Your grace for daily living. Create in them joy in service, courage in danger, and enthusiasm in glorifying You in our Nation and world. Inspire them to be people who will stand for right though the Heavens fall.

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.

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

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

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

APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, the minority leader is so committed to his campaign rhetoric, calling the Senate a political graveyard, that he is killing the House-passed appropriations package that funds our national defense and pays our troops.

Leader MCCONNELL has twice moved to take up the House bill that funds

the Pentagon, as well as the Departments of State, Health and Human Services, Energy, Education, and others, but the majority leader has been constantly blocked by the Democrats.

The minority leader claims to be shocked and outraged that the Senate isn't taking up partisan messaging bills from the House when it is very normal for both Houses not to take up every bill passed by the other Chamber. That doesn't apply to appropriations, however, because one thing is very certain: We have to fund the government, and those bills absolutely have to come up and be passed by both Houses.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant 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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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.

APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, for weeks now, almost daily, I have spoken about the need to get our appropriations process back on track and the need for bipartisan agreement to fund the Federal Government and, particularly, to provide our military commanders with the resources and stability they need.

That kind of smooth process was exactly what Congress was on track for just a few months ago. Leaders in both parties, in both Houses, and at both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue signed onto a deal that set top-line funding levels and ruled out obstacles like poi-

son pills. Alas, as I have discussed at length, policy riders crept back into the process, and our discussions stalled. As a result, here we are again—behind schedule.

We need to get results on appropriations before the end of the year. So, while the House and the Senate continue negotiations on setting the allocations, we need to buy more time. The House and the Senate need to pass a continuing resolution to fund the government through December 20 and allow these talks to continue. The Senate can't originate this funding bill, but we will wait to receive legislation from the House and then vote on it before we head back to our home States.

This is what we need: a CR, as clean as possible, through December 20 to enable more progress on appropriations before the end of this year. A clean CR through December 20 would pass the Senate, and the White House has indicated that President Trump would sign it. Let me say that again. The administration indicates the President is willing and ready to sign a clean CR through December 20 so that we can finish our work.

This is our opportunity to get a bipartisan process back on track. First, with bipartisan, bicameral cooperation, we can safely fund the Federal Government through mid-December so talks can continue. Then, with more cooperation, we can reach agreement on allocations and pass as many of the 12 appropriations bills as possible before the end of the year.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, now, on another matter, while we wait on the House, the Senate will take the opportunity to consider three more of President Trump's well-qualified nominees to the Federal bench and the diplomatic corps.

Later today, we will vote to advance the nomination of Justice Robert

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



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Luck, of Florida—the President's impressive nominee—to be a U.S. circuit judge for the 11th Circuit. Then we will consider Justice Barbara Lagoa, who has also been nominated to the 11th Circuit. Both are impressive nominees who have sterling qualifications—two more fine choices by President Trump. Finally, the Senate will turn its attention to the diplomatic corps and confirm Adrian Zuckerman, of New Jersey, to serve as the Ambassador to Romania.

I hope each of my colleagues will join me in supporting all three confirmations as the Senate continues to give the American people the government for which they voted.

HONG KONG

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, on a final matter, in the last few days, the reports and images coming out of Hong Kong have become even more disturbing. The police crackdown on Hongkongers who are standing up for their freedom and their region's autonomy has intensified.

University campuses now literally look like war zones, with government forces laying siege to groups of students and other protesters. Many observers feel the situation may be verging on something truly terrible. In the midst of this crackdown, just today, Hong Kong's High Court ruled against the executive and actually in favor of the protesters' rights—yet another signal it is the government that is acting beyond the bounds of its authorities.

This latest escalation against Hongkongers comes as Beijing faces international fallout from leaked documents that delineate the government's chilling, systematic campaign against ethnic minorities in another supposedly autonomous region, Xinjiang—hundreds of pages of internal documents from the Chinese Communist Party government. It is a handbook for this Orwellian campaign to effectively erase a religious and ethnic minority in a region that, again, is supposed to be legally distinct from the rest of China. This effort is being conducted using “organs of dictatorship” and “absolutely no mercy.”

The protesters are not the problem. It is Beijing and the Hong Kong leadership that must deescalate. The Communist Party must know it will hurt them catastrophically if it turns Hong Kong into some 21st century version of Tiananmen Square. The United States would not forget it, and neither would China's other trading partners all across the world.

So what can the United States do?

In September, I worked to add language to the State and Foreign Operations appropriations bill to modify the reporting requirements of the 1992 Hong Kong Policy Act, which, by the way, was my bill back in 1992. My additions would work to expose the current tools the Chinese Communist govern-

ment is using to subvert the autonomy of Hong Kong and to allow the U.S. Government to pay for the legal support for Hong Kong's democracy activists.

One important step to help Hong Kong is for the House and Senate Democrats to finally get to “yes” on the appropriations process.

Last week, I had a productive meeting with the senior Senator from Florida on the subject of revising and extending the Hong Kong Policy Act through new legislation. As I indicated, I authored the original bill back in 1992 and have been keenly interested in Hong Kong's status for decades. So I appreciate the leadership Senator RUBIO and others have shown and hope we can find a way to move this important bill. Yet, while I support additional legislation, the United States does not need to wait for new laws to act further. There are already significant tools at the administration's disposal, and I strongly encourage them to use them.

I have been encouraged to hear clear statements on China from key members of President Trump's team in recent months. I would encourage this President, who has seen Chinese behavior for what it is with a clarity that others have lacked, not to shy away from speaking out on Hong Kong himself. The world should hear from him directly that the United States stands with these brave men and women.

This administration has rightly understood what prior administrations have entirely missed. The old consensus was that economic modernization in China would automatically import our values of freedom and human dignity into their society. Now, every day reminds us that this simply has not happened. Instead, Beijing is using modern technology it has obtained through integration with the West to further its political and social control over its own population and expand China's reach beyond its shores.

So, rather than focusing solely on trade, I encourage the administration to make Hong Kong's autonomy a key topic within our bilateral diplomacy. The administration should also take advantage of the tools Congress has already provided in Global Magnitsky to target the individuals who are responsible for egregious human rights abuses. In Xinjiang and Hong Kong, the world is seeing the true face of the Communist Party of China.

The United States has a role to play in standing up for the universal principles of human rights, and I am confident we will fulfill it. Yet our allies and partners must also ask themselves whether they are prepared to live in a world that is being increasingly shaped by those who show absolutely no mercy to religious and ethnic minorities and who confront peaceful protest with violence.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. ERNST). Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

IMPEACHMENT

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, our Republican friends have spent the past several weeks accusing Democrats of being unable to work on serious issues to help the American people because the impeachment inquiry into President Trump is such a distraction. The Republican leader has repeated this absurd claim on the Senate floor, and the President's reelection campaign is now running ads saying Democrats refuse to work on infrastructure or healthcare or drugs because of impeachment. These ads turn truth inside out. Simply put, these ads are a lie.

Senate Democrats put together a trillion-dollar infrastructure plan that would create 15 million jobs. We did that 3 years ago. Instead of working with us on that goal, President Trump walked out of the meeting on infrastructure with Speaker PELOSI and me. We haven't heard a peep out of the administration since then. That was long before impeachment began. We haven't heard from the Republicans on what they want to do on healthcare. We haven't heard from the President on a proposal he sent us on drug prices. So who is holding things up?

This Senate has been a legislative graveyard for months and months and months. It just amazes me the gall, the temerity that the President and our Republican friends have to say that Democrats, because of impeachment, are not moving forward. We have 218 bills that the House sent us. We haven't had one discussion here on impeachment. It has taken up no time.

Leader MCCONNELL, do you want to get things done? Put one of those bills on the floor. Let us have debate.

Republican Senators, go to MCCONNELL. Tell him you want to do some stuff on the floor; that you want to legislate.

No, no, we hear silence—abject, shaky-knee silence—because our Republican friends, and I imagine the leader, are just afraid of President Trump. When he makes up these lies, they just go right along.

Many Republicans have even complained that Leader MCCONNELL has turned the Senate into a legislative graveyard. So the idea that the impeachment inquiry is preventing Congress from debating legislation on infrastructure or prescription drugs or healthcare or any other matter is completely absurd. Democrats are happy