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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. GRASSLEY).

PRAYER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Today's opening prayer will be offered by Msgr. Anthony J. Marcaccio, of St. Pius X, from Greensboro, NC.

The guest Chaplain offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Blessed are You Lord, God of all creation. You are the giver of every good gift, of life and liberty, of peace and prosperity, of wisdom, understanding, and right judgment.

We ask that in Your divine mercy, You would bless our Republic and especially the work of our Senators, that they may discern "all that is true, all that is honorable, all that is right, all that is excellent and worthy of praise" for our Nation.

In this moment, make us mindful of all that has brought us together as a country, and how it far surpasses that which can divide us, so in all things deliberated and done here, we may be preserved as one Nation under God. Amen and 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 (Mrs. FISCHER). The President Pro Tempore.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam 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.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD FOR RENEWABLE FUEL STANDARDS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, a whole bunch of us Midwest biofuel Senators sent a cover letter with our comments to President Trump. Those comments were in regard to the biofuel rules that are out for public comment.

The President has been a supporter of biofuels and the EPA shouldn't undercut President Trump's support of RFS. I urge the EPA and Administrator Wheeler to adjust the proposed supplemental rule to account for actual waived gallons, using hard data from past practices, to send an unambiguous signal to the marketplace.

I am glad to have the opportunity to comment, and I encourage all farmers, biofuel producers, and anybody else interested in supporting the RFS to make their comments. Those comments should be along the lines of what was agreed to in the Oval Office on September 12, which the EPA regulations don't reflect properly.

So tell the EPA that you want the September 12 agreement agreed to. Go to regulations.gov or to the Iowa Farm Bureau or Iowa Corn websites before the deadline on November 27 to tell the EPA to stand behind the President's Oval Office agreement.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, my colleagues are well familiar with my repeated calls for bipartisan progress in funding the Federal Government. For more than 2 months, as the appropriations process idled at partisan roadblocks, I pointed out just how straightforward this entire process could have been. With the road map ne-

gotiated in July by the President and the Speaker, and approved by each of the congressional leaders, we had the necessary commitments to move forward in good faith and avoid partisan riders that would stall the entire effort, but, of course, that didn't happen.

But failing to secure funding for the Federal Government before the end of the year is not an option. Chairman SHELBY continues to lead efforts to settle on subcommittee allocations that can earn bipartisan support. Today, these efforts are ongoing, and with our deadline to prevent a funding lapse rapidly approaching, I am encouraged that the House will apparently be voting today on a continuing resolution to keep the Government funded until December 20, while talks continue. These talks must continue because it is vital that we work in good faith to fund important priorities for the coming year, but what is needed in the near term is to keep the Government open for the next several weeks while this work goes on.

This is not rocket science. The House needs to send us the short-term funding bill which the Senate can pass and which the President will sign. That is the way to keep the government open while our important discussions continue to make progress toward closing out the appropriations process and getting full-year bills to the floor.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, on another matter, for weeks Republicans have been trying to move forward significant bipartisan legislation for the American people. Senate Republicans are trying to get our Democratic colleagues to let us consider defense funding. House Republicans have tried to get Speaker PELOSI to finally allow a vote on the USMCA, and in both Chambers we have been asking Democrats to stop slow-walking the conference committee for the critical Defense bill, the NDAA.

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



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Alas, our Democratic colleagues have not been willing to budge on any of those things. As a result, while the Senate waits for the House to send us short-term funding legislation, we will spend our time on the personnel business.

Yesterday, we advanced the nomination of Justice Robert Luck, of Florida, to be a U.S. circuit judge for the Eleventh Circuit, with the support of a bipartisan majority.

Justice Luck brings an impressive and well-rounded legal record, including a clerkship on the Eleventh Circuit, service in the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Florida, and years spent ruling from the State bench.

Today, we will also advance the nomination of Justice Barbara Lagoa, of Florida, also to serve on the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals. A graduate of Columbia University School of Law, Justice Lagoa has spent years practicing law, serving as a Federal prosecutor, and ruling from both the State appellate bench and the Florida Supreme Court.

I look forward to confirming both of these impressive nominees, along with Adrian Zuckerman, the President's nominee to serve as our Nation's Ambassador to Romania.

THE MIDDLE EAST

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, on a final matter, I spoke yesterday about the courageous people of Hong Kong who are standing up to Beijing and speaking up for their freedoms. But Hongkongers are not alone in bravely speaking up at this time. The Middle East continues to be swept by widespread and cross-sectarian demonstrations.

In Lebanon, in Iraq, and in Iran, millions are demanding a better future, greater justice, less corruption, and more democracy from their governments. These protests expand three countries. Each is unique, but one common thread connects them: Iran.

For years, Iran has systematically sought to undermine the territorial integrity and manipulate the politics of countries all across the Middle East. Nowhere is this more apparent than in Lebanon and Iraq, where Iranian proxies have challenged the very sovereignty of the state.

In Lebanon, Iran backs Hezbollah, the terrorist group that has become a dominant political player. Hezbollah has become a state within a state. Its weapons and fighters do not work to defend the Lebanese state but to embroil it in Syria's civil war and imperil its security by threatening Israel with precision rockets.

In Iraq, Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps has spent years sponsoring Shia militias and proxies that are more loyal to Tehran than to Baghdad or to the people of Iraq.

In both of these countries, Tehran has used and promoted the use of force

to acquire power and to acquire influence. A few weeks ago, the leader of Iran's terrorist Quds Force reportedly flew to Iraq for secret meetings to guide Iraqi leaders through the protests there.

Here is what this Iranian thug told the Iraqis: "We in Iran know how to deal with protests." Enough said.

Well, a violent crackdown on peaceful protesters is not going to resolve anything. What Iraqi and Lebanese leaders must do is stop listening to the poisonous advice of Iranian tyrants, who are losing their own grip on their own people, and start addressing their own citizens' demands for transparency and reform.

Iraq and Lebanon should give their people what they want—less corruption, less malign foreign influence, more opportunity, and the rule of law.

That is the path forward for Iraq and Lebanon. Commit to prosperity and pluralism at home, combat corruption and injustice within all sects and confessions, protect the sovereignty of your country, pursue peace with your neighbors, and enjoy support from the United States as well.

I would note that in contrast to Hezbollah's thugs, Lebanon's Armed Forces by most accounts continue to be one of Lebanon's few institutions of national unity. The LAF has respected the rights of protesters, protected them from violence, and sought to de-escalate tensions on the street.

I know the U.S. military believes its training and partnership with the LAF is paying off, helping it to be a more professional and responsible security force.

So while these events transpire in Iraq and Lebanon, the Iranian people themselves are also engaging in their own demonstrations. Iran used to be a moderate, open, and prosperous society. It could be again. Now tens of thousands of Iranian people themselves are raising their voices in righteous anger at what has become of their living conditions and their country. The Iranian people are feeling the pain inflicted by the brutality, selfishness, and extremism of their ruling class.

The regime seems to be doing all it can to put a stop to this. Reports over the weekend indicated an enormous, unprecedented internet blackout aimed at keeping Iranians in the dark and suggests Iranian leaders are threatening yet another violent crackdown against their own citizens.

But Iran's leaders know exactly what must be done to alter the course of their once-great country and unlock a better future for its citizens. Iran needs to stop pursuing nuclear weapons and long-range missile capabilities, stop supporting terror and cyber offensives, stop causing bloodshed to weaken its neighbors, and stop the horrific mistreatment of its own people.

There is an entire civilized world full of diverse nations that get by just fine—just fine—without engaging in any of these rogue state activities. Iran

engages in all of them. Iranian leaders will either listen to their own citizens and start behaving like a normal nation or they will be treated more and more like the backward pariahs they have become.

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. SCHUMER. Madam 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 MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

HONG KONG

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, over the past few days and weeks, reports about the democratic protests in Hong Kong have grown more and more troubling. The authorities in Hong Kong have cracked down violently on some of the protesters, firing hundreds of rounds of tear gas at a local university and even using lethal force in a few tragic situations. As many have observed, some of the pictures coming out of Hong Kong are reminiscent of a war zone.

Yesterday, the Chinese Communist Party dealt another blow to Hong Kong's special status, criticizing the ruling by the territory's High Court that reversed the Hong Kong Government's ban on masks. The Communist Party declared that only the Chinese legislature has the right to decide whether Hong Kong's laws are consistent with the Hong Kong basic law and that no other authority has the right to make these judgments. That assertion by the Chinese Communist Party is a direct assault on Hong Kong's judicial independence. Make no mistake about it, this Communist Party is cruel and relentless in cracking down on any dissent in every part of China. What they are doing to the Uighurs at the other end of the Chinese country—far away from Hong Kong—is just brutal and awful.

We in the United States stand in solidarity with the democratic protesters, who have every right to assemble and petition their government for the rights of the citizens of Hong Kong. The administration and the President himself should voice their support for the protesters in Hong Kong, which would send an important message to the Chinese Communist Party not to get involved or in any way escalate the situation. Secretary Pompeo's call for calm yesterday is weak tea—not close to enough. Beyond the Presidential statement, there are actions we can take here in Congress because, frankly, I have been very disappointed that the President, in this dramatic situation