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Senate

(Legislative day of Thursday, January 24, 2019)

The Senate met at 12 noon on the expiration of the recess 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, You stand behind life's shadows, keeping watch over those who call on Your sacred Name.

Lord, our help comes from You, and we need Your sufficient grace to bring an end to this partial government shutdown.

Lord, don't permit the weapons formed against America to prosper, for You remain our refuge and fortress. May our lawmakers not be found wanting in this challenging hour of national turmoil. Help them to courageously contend for what is right, as You give them the ability to understand Your unfolding providence.

We pray in Your strong Name. Amen.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Please, God, help us.

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.

STRENGTHENING AMERICA'S SECURITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST ACT OF 2019—MOTION TO PROCEED—Continued

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BOOZMAN). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, the announcement this morning that air operations in major cities in this country on the east coast and other places could be delayed or are interrupted comes as no surprise.

This last week, I met with air traffic controllers in St. Louis and in Aurora, IL. We have over 600 air traffic controllers in Northern Illinois because of O'Hare, Midway, and so many other important airports in that region, and, of course, in St. Louis, with Lambert airfield and others. They have quite extensive air operations.

They explained to me what is going on with air traffic controllers. It shouldn't have worried us before the shutdown. It should frighten us at this moment.

Currently, air traffic controllers work 10-hour shifts. It is a stressful job—an important, stressful job. There is hardly any person more on the front-line of public safety than an air traffic controller. They are expected to concentrate—to concentrate exclusively—for 10 straight hours on each shift. Because of a shortage of air traffic controllers, they now are working 6 days a week.

If you can only imagine for a moment what it is like, and, if you have been to an air traffic control tower, you know what it is like—at least from an outside observer's point of view. There they are, with a screen full of dots. In each one of them is an airplane, and in each airplane tens, maybe even hundreds of lives, and they are trying to make certain that nothing terrible occurs.

Imagine the added burden they face now on the 35th day of this government shutdown. As of today, they will have missed two pay periods. The last paycheck came last year. I listened to these air traffic controllers explain what it meant to them. For some of

them, it has gotten down to the basics. In the St. Louis area, one of the air traffic controllers has to drive a long distance each day. They didn't have the cash for gasoline. He sold his plasma in order to fill the tank to go to work.

At another air traffic control meeting in Aurora, one of the controllers came to me and said that one of his colleagues, who had been working for some time, came to him and said that he only had 5 days left that he could continue doing this—working for nothing—and then he would have to go look for other jobs and possibly jeopardize his future in air traffic control.

The stories came to me one after another. There was a young family where a little child of the family is suffering from medical illnesses of a serious nature. Luckily, they still have health insurance when they are not being paid. When it comes to the out-of-pocket expenses and copayments, they don't have money for it.

Those are the realities these men and women face. They are the realities that have to be on their minds every waking moment. We pray, as passengers in these aircraft, that the only thing on their mind is their job. Instead, for many of these people, it is just basically getting by, keeping their family together.

A lady came up to me at the airport at O'Hare and told me that she and a lot of friends run a food pantry in Oak Park, which is west of the city of Chicago, and she said to me: We have problems. The Federal employees who are coming around now are in desperate need of help, and we are running out of supplies at our food pantries.

Has it come to that in America, where we have to rely on food pantries and charity for men and women who are performing such a vital function as air traffic control? That is the reality of the situation.

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



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Yesterday we had two votes on the floor of the Senate. I know that every Federal employee and their families were tuned in, in the hopes that this shutdown would end yesterday, that we would muster the courage and political will to come together on a bipartisan basis. We didn't. We fell short of the 60 votes needed on both of the measures that were called.

There is a ray of hope but only a small one. The conversations at the highest level continued last night and even into today. My only hope is that the President will decide that this shutdown has to come to an end.

He alone stood in the beginning and said he was proud to claim that he was the author of this shutdown. I don't see how anyone can be proud of what has happened in this country. It is time to put it behind us. It is time to move forward with serious negotiations about border security and other issues but not at the expense of 800,000 Federal employees.

VENEZUELA

Mr. President, last year, my staff prevailed on me to make a trip which I really wasn't sure I should do. It was to Caracas, Venezuela. I had never been to that country, and I was visiting there at the invitation of their government. Nicolas Maduro was the President of Venezuela, and he did not enjoy the very best of reputations, but yet he was willing to see me.

So for several days I went down to Venezuela, met with President Maduro, met with the opposition, met with the American who was being held prisoner by the Maduro regime, and in matter of a few days, got an impression of what was happening in Venezuela.

It is hard to imagine that 30 years ago, Venezuela was one of the most up-and-coming countries in South America. It was considered one of most prosperous. Their oil industry was generating money in amounts they had never imagined before. The lifestyles of people were improving. There were a lot of things to be said on the positive side of the ledger, but over the span of the next 20 or 30 years, things became tremendously worse.

Last year, as I had this opportunity to travel in Venezuela and meet with then-President Maduro, I met also with members of the elected National Assembly, civic and humanitarian groups, medical professionals, and the exceptional men and women who were working at the U.S. Embassy.

What I found was that this once-proud and relatively wealthy democracy, last year was on the verge of political, economic, and humanitarian collapse.

The stories I learned in that short period of time were heartbreaking—of children fainting at school because they were hungry, the return of diseases that had once been eradicated, a massive outflow of millions of refugees from Venezuela to neighboring countries, some rates of infectious disease being rivaled only by war zones in this

world. So many children were going so hungry while the government cronies were siphoning off millions of dollars from the state food aid program. It was infuriating and disgusting.

I walked down the streets of Caracas and saw firsthand Venezuelans emaciated, waiting in long lines at ATM machines, and I asked: Why is it every hour of the night and day there is a long line at the ATM machine? Inflation was so bad in that country that people had to wait patiently in line to max out each day's withdrawal from their accounts so they would have enough money for a roundtrip bus ride the next day.

I walked through one of the private hospitals, and I heard of unimaginable shortages of key medicines, shortages even worse in the state hospitals, where simple blood tests were no longer possible.

In fact, just this week, a collaborative and brave Venezuelan media effort entitled "Petrofraude" released a devastating investigation. It details how the Venezuelan Government decimated the nation's oil supply to enrich the cronies of President Maduro and attempt to buy diplomatic support, all while its people were dying of malnutrition, and inflation was soaring beyond 1 million percent.

When I met President Maduro last year, I told him—this was in April—that if he proceeded with the planned, rigged election, he would find himself even more isolated in the world, and he would bring even greater suffering on his people. He ignored me, and of course, sadly, that is what happened.

In May, he went forward with a bogus election whose illegitimate results were not recognized by many countries in the region.

Maduro also then kicked out America's top diplomats at the time—two of our finest whom I have had the pleasure of meeting and working with on the trip.

Yet, during my visit, I was also inspired and found some hope. There were brave civic leaders who were looking for public service for the right reason—healthcare workers, doing the best they could with almost nothing, and the next generation of young elected members of the National Assembly, the only legitimate democratic body left in the nation of Venezuela.

These young leaders had notably won election in areas that once supported Hugo Chavez, supposedly the patriarch of the country and the godfather of Maduro, but they had prevailed in districts that had gone for Chavez in previous elections because the people in those areas had grown disillusioned with the years of corruption, repression, and movement toward dictatorship by Mr. Maduro.

Among this group of patriotic elected officials were some extraordinary leaders with whom I managed to have dinner one evening.

We went to a somewhat secret location on the second floor of a neighbor-

hood restaurant. There were five of them. They were on the opposition side from President Maduro. They were careful not to meet or be seen too much in public, and I sat and talked to them about why they were in politics. They weren't even being paid. Maduro had decided to stop paying them after they were elected, and yet they continued to try to serve.

At one point, one of them said to me: Senator, if you come back next year, I can tell you that of the five of us, two will likely be in prison, two will be exiled, and one may have disappeared. That is what happens when you oppose the Maduro regime.

I thought to myself, there is a heavy price to pay for politics in our country, but it doesn't get close to what these young people were facing.

Seated at that table that night was a young 35-year-old man. His name was Juan Guaido—the same Juan Guaido who was recently chosen as President of the Venezuelan National Assembly.

This last Wednesday, he did a courageous and dangerous thing. He announced that under the Constitution, he believed he had the power to take control and to call for a free and credible election, and he announced that he would be the interim President of Venezuela under that Constitution.

It was a dramatic move. Guaido now finds himself as the interim Venezuelan leader—35 years old.

What has happened since he made that announcement? The United States has recognized him, as has Canada, and virtually every other country in South and Central America, save three, and I will spell them out: Bolivia, Cuba, and Nicaragua which refuse to recognize him.

The Secretary General of the Organization of American States has also recognized him.

Under article 233 of the Venezuelan Constitution, if the Presidency of the country is deemed unfilled by a vote of the National Assembly, then the National Assembly President "shall take charge of the Presidency" and lead a timely transition back to a legitimate government.

This is what has happened on the streets of Caracas because of his courage: The National Assembly passed a measure finding that the Office of the Presidency was vacant due to a clearly stolen election.

So Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, the United Kingdom have all recognized Guaido as Venezuela's legitimate leader, in addition to the United States and Canada, I might add.

Earlier this week, I also joined in support of his effort, calling on him to fulfill his constitutional role to help Venezuela return to the community of democracies and to do so with a thoughtful and timely transition to a credible election in which the Venezuelan people can once again choose their leaders through a fair, transparent process.

Yesterday I had the privilege to speak at length with President Guaido and offer my support for his transition. Just as when I met with him last year in Caracas, he was deeply thoughtful and expressed his love of his country that he serves. That couldn't have been more clear in our conversation.

He knows how much the Venezuelan people have suffered, how the Maduro regime bankrupted the nation and destroyed its democracy and economy, and how desperate the people of this country are to rejoin the community of democracies.

I told him we in the United States stand ready to help, and the Venezuelan people need our help to rebuild their country's democracy and economy and to help return the millions of Venezuelan refugees safely.

Yesterday the administration pledged \$20 million of humanitarian support to the opposition, to those who are in the streets trying to reclaim democracy in that country.

I support that \$20 million and hope other countries will join us. It is just the beginning of the help they will need.

This once-proud country can return to the community of democracies. It can start to restore the faith of the people in their government. It can start to answer the basics.

To think of what they are going through, to think that children are fainting in school because of malnutrition and that basic antibiotics are not even available in the hospitals, these are unthinkable developments in any modern country in our hemisphere. I hope this effort, as dangerous as it may be for the new interim President, leads to a credible free election and the restoration of democracy in Venezuela.

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

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

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. CASSIDY. Mr. President, obviously, the news that is dominating Washington, DC, and indeed the Nation is the shutdown.

Yesterday, I joined in a colloquy with other colleagues, both Democrats and Republicans, asking that we find some middle way. The President clearly has moved. He has offered to reopen the government, I am told, if only a down-payment will be made to construct the wall, and has come forward with a good-faith effort. Ms. PELOSI—I would ask that she, as the Speaker, who seems to be the chief negotiating partner, do the same.

I myself have two pieces of legislation that I will be offering today or Monday that will ease the burden on those Federal workers who are still

working and not getting paid—and we thank them so much for doing so—as well as come up with an alternative way to perhaps fund the wall.

NFC CHAMPIONSHIP CONTROVERSY

Mr. President, with the seriousness of that, I also want to address one other issue that is particularly serious to folks in Louisiana. I hope it doesn't seem out of place with the shutdown, but I can state that to the folks back home, it is something that continues to disturb them.

I would like to bring up the NFC championship game. The State of Louisiana is outraged because of what happened in the Superdome last Sunday. Televisions were broken, Super Bowl boycott concerts scheduled, billboards were put up in Atlanta, and fans filed lawsuits. My colleague in the House of Representatives is calling for the NFL commissioner, Roger Goodell, to testify in front of Congress on the travesty that occurred 5 days ago.

What happened, in my belief and the belief of many, was the most blatant and consequential blown call in NFL history. For those who missed it, on Sunday night during an NFC championship game, the score was tied with less than 2 minutes to go. It is third and long, and the Saints are in position to score. Drew Brees throws a pass, which is right there. There is the ball, there is the receiver, and there is the defender.

For those not familiar with football—and I know the Presiding Officer played at the University of Arkansas; not a bad school, even though it is not a Louisiana school—the defender is not looking back at the quarterback. He is not looking to intercept. He is only looking to plow through the receiver.

Every drunk sitting on a stool in every bar throughout the Nation looked up at that TV and said: There is interference.

What you don't see from this picture I am showing, though, is there is also helmet-to-helmet contact, which is also a penalty.

It was a twofer. On one play, the Los Angeles Rams defender committed two egregious penalties, and everybody in the Superdome and everybody watching knew it happened—except for him, the referee.

I don't mean to pick on this referee. I am sure he is a nice man, a good family man, et cetera. But he missed a call with less than 2 minutes that everyone agrees would have changed the course of the game. The Saints would have had a first down automatically, they would have drained the clock, they would have then kicked a field goal, and the game would have been over.

LeBron James, Dez Bryant, Melvin Gordon, Richard Sherman, J.J. Watt, and even Hulk Hogan took to Twitter to call out this absurd call.

The defender said: I interfered with him.

He admitted it.

I thought I was going to get called, but I didn't.

The pass interference was not called, and now the Rams will play in the Super Bowl against the Patriots instead of the Saints, which is kind of a shame. It really is a taint upon the Super Bowl. It won't be the two best teams; it will be the two teams that got there, at least in one case, because someone did not see an obvious call.

Now, I don't just mean to kvetch—and obviously all Saints fans continue to be upset—but it is actually, if you will, about the integrity of the game. If you speak of the NFL, it almost becomes a metaphor for that which is the most competitive, the highest quality, where coaches and athletes dedicate themselves, honing their skills to the absolute highest level. As folks say, if you can win in the NFL, you can win anywhere. It is a metaphor. The Saints—every football team invests heavily in this. Football fans really come to town on this.

So the question is to the NFL. We have a few questions for you.

How are the officials selected for this game? For example, they grade officials after every game. Were the best officials sent to this game, or was it just a rotation? If it is just a rotation, how did the referees who officiated this game grade?

I don't want this to be too personal, but if somebody commits a penalty during a football game, the referee will say: No. 74 was offside, and the NFL has accountability in the performance of everybody in the game. So I think Saints fans would like to have an accountability for the referees.

Did people look into conflicts of interest? It has been pointed out that the referee who missed the call lives in Los Angeles. Is he a diehard Rams fan?

Again, how did these referees get scored in this game? After every game, the referee is kind of given a grade. Was it an A-plus or a C-minus? And if it is a lower score, what was the comment on this particular play?

Saints coach Sean Payton said the senior vice president of officiating admitted to him in a private phone call that the official messed up, but there is still no official statement from the NFL. Perhaps they can answer these questions in an official statement.

Football is not only a game; it is part of our culture. I would state that the NFL has a responsibility to the millions of fans across the country to ensure the integrity of the game and to answer these questions and perhaps a few others.

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

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

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, this morning the FAA grounded planes at

LaGuardia Airport, averaging more than 1,000 flights a day. They made this decision because of a shortage in air traffic control staff, who are not being paid because the President fulfilled his promise to shut down the government 35 days ago.

The FAA's website crashed as people looked for information. Stocks for airlines took a hit, and air traffic in other airports, including Philadelphia and Newark, were delayed because of staffing shortages. We will continue to see the ripple effects of this today. It is not like if travel in and out of LaGuardia is disrupted, it will be business as usual at other airports. More flights will be delayed. LaGuardia has resumed operations, but what is clear is that the ATC, or the air traffic control staff, is thin, and they are making game-time decisions—go, no go.

Apparently, we need another reminder that this shutdown is stupid and dangerous, that it leaves communities and commerce on the edge, because the voices of those affected already—Native Americans, Coast Guard servicemembers, FBI agents, IRS employees, National Park Service workers, and domestic violence victims—weren't enough. The FAA is unique because they have an obligation and the authority under the law to make a go-no-go decision based on safety. They can look at their staffing numbers and say: We can't do this safely, so stop. But the FBI and the Coast Guard don't get to say: Hey, hold off, everybody.

TSA agents and the TSA itself does not have the authority to make a similar call. They can raise the alarm, but they do not have the authority to stop people from coming through checkpoints. They just have to make do. The same goes for all of the families affected by the shutdown. There is no "go-no-go" decision. They just have to try to make it work.

The FAA decision demonstrates what is happening throughout the government and throughout society right now. People are right on the edge. Some of them have fallen off that edge. Today, the shutdown became an inconvenience to the very small percentage of Americans who fly regularly, but, more importantly, today is an indicator of what is happening to the government, of who matters to the government.

I certainly hope, as lots of pundits, and journalists, and politicians have mentioned, that once air traffic starts to slow, once airports get snarled, we are at the end of this process and the shutdown will end shortly. I don't know if that is true, but I sure hope it is true.

On another level, it should precipitate a little shame, a little introspection about how we got here, because to fix this now, when airports are snarled, is to say we were OK with people not getting food stamps, we were OK with Native American health clinics running out of medicine, Federal workers working without two paychecks, and

Coast Guard men and women deployed without paychecks, so long as the President can build his wall. But if flights are delayed, if the elites are imperiled or inconvenienced in any way at the all, game over, and shame on us if that is what it takes to shut down this shutdown.

This entire time, as funding has run out for food banks and domestic violence shelters, everyone has been focused on whether or not Speaker PELOSI will win the State of the Union exchange with the President, and what are the polling numbers, and how are Democrats and Republicans positioning this, and will these polling drops matter in 2020?

But the moment the elite of this country have a moment of inconvenience, this thing seems to be wrapping up, and shame on us.

Everyone is focused on this slow, horrible train wreck that they can watch with some distance. Suddenly, air travel stops and everybody freaks out. Shame on us. It is day 35. People have gone without—without food, medicine, gas in their car, paychecks—but delayed flights is the straw that breaks the camel's back.

This has to end. But it should never have even started. It shouldn't have taken a day like this to be, possibly, maybe not the end, maybe not the beginning but the beginning of the end of this shutdown.

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

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

NINETY-FIRST SENATE PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to offer a few reflections in these opening days—now opening weeks—of the 116th Congress.

On January 3, I was honored to be sworn in as the 91st Senate President pro tempore. As many of you know, I love history. I studied to be a history teacher, and I have devoted six decades of my life to public service where, maybe, I helped make a little history along the way. I have represented the people of Iowa as a legislator since 1958.

At the age of 25, as the youngest legislator in the Iowa State House, I never dreamed that one day I would be named a constitutional officer in the Senate.

For the last 38 years, it has been my great privilege to serve and represent the people of Iowa as a Senator. It is with great pride on behalf of my home State that I step into this leadership role and follow in the footsteps of my predecessors as President pro tempore of the Senate. In fact, one of those predecessors is from my home State. It was 100 years ago exactly that Iowa Re-

publican Senator Albert Baird Cummins became the 68th Senate President pro tempore. He served as President pro tempore from 1919 until 1925.

In my nearly four decades here in the Senate, I served alongside seven Presidents pro tempore: Senator Thurmond, of South Carolina; Senator Stennis, of Mississippi; Senator Byrd, of West Virginia; Senator Stevens, of Alaska; Senator Inouye, of Hawaii; Senator LEAHY, of Vermont; and Senator Hatch, of Utah. Each served with honor and distinction, bringing their own style and substance to this office.

When Senator Byrd was elected to this office, he noted that "the election of a Senator to the office of the President pro tempore has always been considered one of the highest honors offered to a Senator by the Senate body."

I am proud to join the ranks of this impressive and respected group of public servants and legislators. Article I of the Constitution directs that a President pro tempore be chosen by the Senate. The President pro tempore serves as the President of the Senate when the Vice President is unavailable and serves a number of other ceremonial and ministerial functions.

I appreciate the support of my colleagues who elected me to this position. In Federalist No. 62, James Madison considered it a virtue that Senators have "more advanced age and a longer period of citizenship." Traditionally, the President pro tempore has also served as a senior statesman for the Senate, standing up for the values that make the Senate the world's greatest deliberative body. Perhaps that is why it is customary for a Senator of the majority party with the longest record of continuous service to become President pro tempore.

When you have been here as long as I have, you learn some very valuable lessons. You learn that you have to work hard, put your constituents first, and stand up for your principles. That is also how you happen to get reelected by the people of your State. Because the Senate is not a majoritarian body, you also learn that in order to get anything important done, you have to seek consensus and develop relationships, and develop those relationships on both sides of the aisle. You have to learn the art of negotiation and bipartisan compromise, something that seems to be missing right now as the government is shut down. You also learn that it is not enough to pass laws. You also have to make sure that those laws are followed and that the taxpayer dollars are spent appropriately according to what Congress intends in the law.

The humorist Will Rogers once said that about all he could say about the Senate is that it opens with a prayer and it closes with an investigation. In my experience, that is not always a bad thing because it is by conducting oversight and investigations that we hold the executive branch responsible to the

taxpayers—no matter which party is in power. That is why I have always dedicated a significant amount of resources to oversight, even when I was a new Senator. That is why, when some have suggested that Agencies should only respond to the oversight requests of committee chairmen and ranking members, I have fought back—even when 2 years ago, the new administration under Trump tried to say that only chairmen and ranking members should get this information—because I believe that every Senator has a duty to the taxpayers who sent us here to take an active part in congressional oversight efforts.

The Supreme Court observed in *Watkins v. United States* that “the power of Congress to conduct investigations is inherent in the legislative process.” Oversight helps us to write better bills and to be wiser with taxpayer dollars. It is also how we make the Agencies accountable to the American people.

Over time, as our government has grown in size, Congress has delegated more and more power to the executive branch—probably more power than we should have. Some of the delegation is necessary for the government to function efficiently, but there is an inherent danger whenever Congress delegates power to the executive branch, especially if we delegate legislative authority.

When they drafted the Constitution, the Founders of our Nation were rightfully concerned that those in power would be tempted to abuse power in favor of their own interests. As we all studied in high school government, to prevent this, the Founders divided power among three branches of government and set up a system of government in which, to paraphrase James Madison in *Federalist No. 51*: Ambition [is] made to counteract ambition. It is through this system of checks and balances between ambitious branches of government that our fundamental liberties are protected. The concentration of too much power in the executive branch upsets the careful balance of the separated powers that was envisioned by our Founders.

As legislators, it is our duty then, as the Founders rightfully intended, for us to protect and defend the interests of our branch of government. So, when we write laws, we must be careful not to cede too much authority to the executive branch, and we must make sure that if we have delegated authority, we conduct rigorous oversight to make sure it is being used appropriately. It is only through rigorous oversight that we make sure that the government of the people and by the people then works for the people.

As President pro tempore, I will assure my colleagues and my constituents that I will bring the same Iowa work ethic, decency, and integrity to this job that I have cultivated throughout my years of public service. Like my President pro tempore predecessors, I will work to uphold the dig-

nity and decorum of this body and to defend the Senate's institutional interests. It is what our Founders expected and the American people deserve.

Each Member of the Senate is privileged to serve. I especially welcome nine of the newest Members to the Senate. There are seven Republicans and two Democrats who are new: Senator BLACKBURN of Tennessee, Senator BRAUN of Indiana, Senator CRAMER of North Dakota, Senator HAWLEY of Missouri, Senator MCSALLY of Arizona, Senator ROMNEY of Utah, Senator ROSEN of Nevada, Senator SINEMA of Arizona, and Senator SCOTT of Florida.

To my newest colleagues whom I have just named and, of course, to all of my colleagues who have been around here for quite a while, I want you to know my door is open. As I tell a lot of new colleagues—and I can repeat it for older colleagues—if you want to know anything about what CHUCK GRASSLEY is thinking or doing, just ask me. I will bet, 99 percent of the time, I will be able to tell you exactly what it is. If I can't, I will be glad to tell you why I can't tell you. I look forward to working with each of you in the weeks, months, and years ahead.

With great honor and, of course, humility, I look forward to my service as President pro tempore. Like my good friend and our most recent President pro tempore, ORRIN HATCH, I look forward to opening the people's business each day in the Senate. I will then work the rest of that day to deliver on my commitment to find solutions to our country's most pressing problems, to seek common ground with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, and to exercise rigorous oversight over the other branches of government. Our Nation's most pressing problem today is that of getting the government opened up.

I thank my colleagues.

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

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

RECESS

Mr. PERDUE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate recess subject to the call of the Chair.

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

Thereupon, the Senate, at 1:30 p.m., recessed until 2:44 p.m., and was reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mrs. CAPITO).

STRENGTHENING AMERICA'S SECURITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST ACT OF 2019—MOTION TO PROCEED—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will come to order.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, for weeks, I have continuously said I wouldn't let the Senate become a theater for show votes and messaging stunts from either side. We would only vote on plans that stood an actual chance of being signed by the President and, thus, obviously becoming law.

So I was glad to hear today the President's announcement that he and our Democratic colleagues have reached an agreement that will immediately reopen the government while providing the room to negotiate a funding bill for the Department of Homeland Security. Further, negotiations on DHS will be prioritized over the consideration of any other funding bill. With cooperation, we can pass legislation opening the government, and we can send the DHS appropriations bill to a conference today with the House.

I am glad the closed portions of the Federal Government will reopen and get back online. I am glad the dedicated men and women of the Coast Guard, law enforcement, the TSA, and all of the other Federal employees will not have to go longer without pay for their work and will receive their backpay. I know the pain this episode has caused for many Kentuckians and for people all over our country. They deserve this resolution.

In going forward, I hope our Democratic friends will stay true to the commitment they have stated constantly over the past weeks that once the government was reopened, they would be perfectly willing to negotiate in good faith on full-year government funding that would include a significant investment in urgently needed border security measures, including physical barriers.

After all, the only way Federal workers are going to have stability and certainty beyond the next 3 weeks and the only way our border is going to have real security is if the Democrats will stop playing partisan games and get serious about negotiating with the President on a long-term compromise.

The days ahead will tell us whether our Democratic colleagues are actually serious about securing our Nation—whether they actually mean what they say. The President has called on the Senate to act on these proposals, and now that there has been an agreement between the Democrats and the White House, we can make that happen.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, the longest shutdown in American history will finally end today. The President has agreed to our request to open the government and then debate border security, which is great news for 800,000 Federal workers and millions of Americans who depend upon government services. I thank President Trump and Leader MCCONNELL.