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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.

Almighty God, we rejoice that You still answer prayers. When we cry to You, You continue to be an ever-present help during seasons of trouble.

Lord, we marvel at Your power as we rest confident in Your ability to accomplish Your purposes. Today, inspire our Senators to put their total trust in You. May they not fear anything that may assail them on every side. Help them to remember that there is none holy like You, and nothing can compare to Your majesty and might.

We pray in Your great 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. TILLIS). The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak in morning business for 1 minute.

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

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, Iowa has had 14 presumptive positive cases of COVID-19. My staff and I remain in constant communication with Federal agencies to ensure that the Federal Government is properly managing emergency threats to the public health. I am also in regular touch with the Iowa Department of Public Health, which is meeting daily with its part-

ners to share information with all Iowans.

While each day brings updates regarding COVID-19, what remains constant are the prevention efforts that we have all heard about, and just to name a couple: washing your hands often and covering your cough.

To find further updates and guidance about the COVID-19, please visit my website at grassley.senate.gov.

REMEMBERING BIJAN GHAI SAR

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, on another matter, in November of 2017, Bijan Ghaisar was shot and killed by two U.S. Park Police officers. That person was unarmed and in his vehicle.

The National Park Service oversees the U.S. Park Police and still hasn't responded to a letter that Senator WARNER of Virginia and I wrote to the Park Service last November.

Now, we all know that Park Service officials are very concerned about the cherry blossom season. They just had a press conference to announce the peak dates of this year's cherry blossom season. Acting Director Vela needs to take his agency's obligations to respond to Senator WARNER's and my letter and other inquiries from Congress as seriously as he takes the weather updates.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, this morning, the Senate and House Sergeants at Arms announced the suspension of public tours and nonofficial access to the Capitol Complex beginning at the close of business today and running through the end of March. Their decision was made in close consulta-

tion with the Attending Physician of the U.S. Congress, Dr. Brian Monahan.

I support the decision of these non-partisan officers. It follows new guidance from the Washington, DC, Department of Health encouraging that all nonessential mass gatherings of more than 1,000 people be postponed. The Capitol Complex welcomes many times that many visitors on a typical day, particularly at this time of year.

Congress will continue to do our work. Offices will be able to welcome constituents and visitors for meetings and official business by appointment, but in deference to the experts and to protect the health of many Americans who travel to our Nation's Capital, tourism and nonofficial access to the Capitol and the complex will be put on pause.

This virus is challenging our Nation in ways that feel unfamiliar to us, but our great country is strong, we are equipped, and we have overcome far greater challenges before. I know the entire Congress will look forward to welcoming all Americans back to visit their beautiful Capitol as soon as possible.

In the meantime, we continue to encourage everyone to follow the facts, listen to the experts, and take smart and calm precautions as appropriate. Every American can access up-to-date recommendations for their own personal circumstances at www.coronavirus.gov.

Last night, President Trump addressed the Nation on the broader, ongoing effort to slow and mitigate the spread of the virus here on American soil. As I have noted before, the administration's early proactive measures to repatriate U.S. citizens and restrict travel from China bought more time for public health professionals to prepare our response, and the funding measure that Congress passed last week is sending an infusion of new funding into laboratory research, frontline medical care, and everything in between.

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



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With those critical steps already taken, this week brought a further opportunity to help communities and families face the economic effects of the virus spread. Unfortunately, it appears at this hour that the Speaker and House Democrats instead chose to produce an ideological wish list that was not tailored closely to the circumstances. One is reminded of the famous comment from President Obama's first Chief of Staff: "You never want a serious crisis to go to waste." Instead of focusing on immediate relief to affected individuals, families, and businesses, the House Democrats chose to wander into various areas of policy that are barely related, if at all, to the issue before us.

Instead of working within existing law and within existing systems to deliver targeted relief as officially and effectively as possible, the Speaker's proposal would stand up a needless thicket of new bureaucracy. They would task offices like the Social Security Administration with standing up brand-new bureaucracy that would delay the delivery of aid to those who need it.

As currently drafted, the proposal appears to impose permanent unfunded mandates on businesses that could cause massive job losses and put thousands of small businesses at risk. The administration was ready to collaborate. The Senate was ready to seriously consider a compromise product, but it appears that over in the House, left-wing political messaging may have taken priority over the needs of our country. Certainly, this is disappointing.

I want to commend Secretary Mnuchin for his efforts and his continued conversation. At a minimum, I hope that Senate Democrats will not block potential requests from our colleagues today to pass smaller, non-controversial pieces of legislation right away that would bolster particular aspects of the fight against coronavirus.

The good news is that our Nation's economy remains strong. The President is continuing to take action himself. We just passed billions—billions—in urgent funding just last week, and the Senate will continue to stand ready and willing to work toward further bicameral, bipartisan actions when the House Democrats decide to get serious.

USA FREEDOM REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2020

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, now, on another matter, yesterday the House of Representatives did come together around a bipartisan agreement to renew some critical national security tools. The USA FREEDOM Reauthorization Act of 2020 will reauthorize key authorities granted to intelligence and national security professionals under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act.

First and foremost, this means ensuring that the men and women tasked with rooting out espionage and stop-

ping terrorist activity on U.S. soil are equipped with the powers they need to be successful.

Today, the threats these professionals confront are as serious and diverse as ever. Terrorist groups continue to wish us harm. Major hostile powers like Russia and China remain committed to undermining the integrity of American institutions, from our infrastructure to our elections.

The targeted powers reauthorized by this legislation are a vital part of the efforts to protect American communities. That is a fact. It is a fact that has been reaffirmed time and again by Attorneys General and by the numerous reauthorizations granted by Congress.

This time is no different. We can't mistake the safety and security that FISA authorities have helped preserve for evidence that they are no longer needed. At the same time, we cannot mistake a vital process for a perfect one. The 2016 election showed us perfectly clearly that the authorities granted under FISA are in need of targeted reforms to improve accountability. That was backed up by the findings of the Department of Justice inspector general.

That is why this legislation contains a number of specific reforms to address the kinds of failures that embarrassed the system in 2016: more oversight over the practices of the FISA Court, more declassification and more compliance practices, higher level approval for certain sensitive applications, and more.

Our responsibility here is twofold. We have to continue equipping our national security professionals and the intelligence community to anticipate, confront, and eliminate the threats facing our country, and we also have to respond to the failures of 2016 with real reforms that ensure the public trust is handled appropriately.

This legislation, passed by a bipartisan majority in the House and endorsed by the Attorney General, strikes the right balance. I am confident that it will pass the Senate as well. It is not a question of if this passes but when.

I hope that our colleagues who may not choose to vote for this legislation will not deny this body the opportunity to renew these authorities today to prevent any lapse. I hope none of our colleagues choose to force these important national security tools to temporarily lapse for the sake of making a political point, which will not change the outcome. In fact, I hope we can renew these authorities today.

But if we cannot, if some of our colleagues choose to object, the lapse will only be temporary, similar to past short lapses between reauthorizations. These national security tools should not lapse. They do not need to lapse, and I hope none of our colleagues choose to unilaterally force them to lapse just for the sake of making a point. But at least it would only be temporary because this bill is going to

pass, these authorities are getting renewed, and that is a great thing for the security of our Nation and the safety of the American people. I hope it can happen today.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—H.R. 6172

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read the bill by title for the second time.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 6172) to amend the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978 to prohibit the production of certain business records, and for other purposes.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, in order to place the bill on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I object to further proceedings.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection having been heard, the bill will be placed on the calendar.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of James P. Danly, of Tennessee, to be a Member of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission for the remainder of the term expiring June 30, 2023.

Mr. McCONNELL. 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 (Mrs. HYDE-SMITH). Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Democratic leader is recognized.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, yesterday, the World Health Organization officially declared COVID-19—known as the coronavirus—a pandemic, saying that it was “deeply concerned