



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 116th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 166

WASHINGTON, MONDAY, MAY 4, 2020

No. 83

House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 5, 2020, at 10:30 a.m.

Senate

MONDAY, MAY 4, 2020

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.

O God of our salvation, deliver us from fear. Your might and majesty continue to bring us peace in spite of the challenges we face. Lord, we can meet these challenges with Your power that transcends human understanding. When You whisper, dangers flee into the darkness. The sound of Your footsteps causes tribulations to hide.

Almighty God, permit our lawmakers to be aware of Your providential guidance. May they depend on You to lead them according to Your will. Give them the wisdom to trust You when they can't see the road before them, believing that You will be their light in the darkness.

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. HAWLEY). The Senator from Iowa.

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

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

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, Americans from coast to coast hunkered down to stop the spread of the virus. Office workers, including my staff in Washington, adapted to work from home. But not all Americans can do their jobs from home. Many must work away from home to provide essential services for our communities. I am talking about workers who harvest, process, and deliver our food; the crews who provide sanitation services and keep our communications, transportation, and energy grids running around the clock; America's postal workers and truckdrivers who deliver mail and transport goods across the country; the grocery store clerks and factory workers who make toilet paper, diapers, and consumer products we can't live without.

On behalf of Iowans and the rest of America, I thank the frontline workers who are on the job, working away from home, in the line of duty. Thank you all for your service and sacrifice.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, the Senate is back in session. In this unusual period for our Nation, it has been more than 5 weeks since the full Senate last convened. As I explained on

March 25, right before we passed the CARES Act 96 to 0, the Senate has kept right on working this whole time.

We have monitored the implementation of that bill—the largest rescue package in American history—and strengthened it where necessary. We passed further legislation to provide even more economic assistance, even more support of testing, and more relief for hospitals and healthcare workers.

This deadly coronavirus does not take days off, and so the U.S. Senate has not either. For more than a month, we were among the many Americans who have found creative ways to telework and continue doing our jobs remotely. But now the time has come for us to continue conducting our Nation's business in ways that are only possible with Senators here in the Capitol.

For this work period, the Senate will shift out of the ranks of those Americans who are working remotely and into the ranks of the Americans working in essential sectors who are listening to expert guidance and modifying their routines and ultimately continuing to man their posts to keep the country running.

If it is essential that brave healthcare workers, grocery store workers, truckdrivers, and many other Americans continue to carefully show up for work, then it is essential that their U.S. Senators carefully show up ourselves and support them.

I want to thank the dedicated men and women who worked hard to develop solutions so the Senate can take

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



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these careful steps back toward in-person operations: Dr. Brian Monahan and the entire Office of the Attending Physician, well done; everyone in the Offices of the Architect of the Capitol, the Sergeant at Arms, the Secretary of the Senate, and our colleagues on the Rules Committee and their staff. Of course, the teams who support our networks and telecommunications were working hard day and night during these weeks of remote work.

Even more broadly, I want to recognize and thank all—all—the essential Senate staff who are here with us today in person so the Senate can function. Whether they be staff members in our own offices and committee offices, all the nonpartisan professionals who serve the institution itself, and, particularly, our facilities employees, custodians, food service staff, and, of course, the men and women of the Capitol Police, we are grateful for your service, and, more importantly, your country is grateful for your service. You are literally helping our government function in the midst of this crisis.

The Senate is back in session because we have important work to do for the Nation. Critical posts throughout the Federal Government—from public health to national security and beyond—remain vacant. Qualified nominees who have been held up for too long already have become even more necessary in these uncertain times.

On the floor and in committee, the Senate will be acting on key nominations that relate directly to the safety of the American people, oversight of our coronavirus legislation, and more. We need to continue to maintain and safeguard our domestic nuclear resources. That is our first nominee, Mr. Feitel.

We need to keep protecting our Nation against foreign intelligence services. That is another nominee we will be moving soon, Mr. Evanina. Those around the world who wish harm on Americans are not going to give us a free pass until the pandemic is over, so the Senate needs to overcome obstruction and continue to act.

I don't think anybody could seriously argue that filling critical national security posts is not essential Senate business. But to any of my colleagues who may wish that we did not have to devote floor time and rollcall votes to these kinds of nominations, I would simply say: I agree with you. I agree with you.

Unfortunately, for more than 3 years now, my colleagues in Democratic leadership have used across-the-board obstruction to force floor time and even cloture votes for the kinds of sub-Cabinet level nominations that used to travel easily by voice vote. If any of my colleagues on either side wish that we could recover the Senate's tradition and spend less floor time on these sorts of nominations, I would invite them to share their view with the distinguished Democratic leadership and invite them

to change their tactics. But as long as floor time and rollcall votes remain the only way for the Senate to fill important posts, that is what we will do. We cannot let nuclear watchdogs or counterintelligence leaders stay on the sidelines.

The Senate is going to be as smart and safe as we possibly can, and we are going to show up for work like the essential workers we are. Our bosses are the American people, and they are counting on us to keep on serving.

It is good to see the Chair and all of our colleagues again. I am grateful that all 100 of us have come through the last several weeks safely and in good health. Let's work together, across the aisle, and get some more work done for the American people.

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 consider the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Robert J. Feitel, of Maryland, to be Inspector General, Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

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. 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 MINORITY LEADER

The Democratic leader is recognized.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, the Senate convenes a session this evening during a trying time for our Nation. As we speak, millions of our citizens are respecting stay-at-home orders and doing their part to stop the spread of this pernicious disease. Millions upon millions are now newly unemployed, dependent on the actions we take in Congress to stave off financial disaster. More than 1 million Americans have tested positive for COVID-19. More than 67,000 lives have been lost.

My home State of New York has been hit the hardest. The loss of so many precious lives, the suffering of so many

families unable to comfort or even say goodbye to a loved one have been extremely painful, enough to break your heart.

At the same time, while we are grieving, we are also inspired by the bravery of our doctors and nurses, healthcare workers, first responders, and other daily heroes—many of them immigrants—on the frontlines of this crisis. To them we owe an extraordinary debt of gratitude, an enormous thank-you that I hear out the windows of my apartment and many in New York at 7 p.m. when we applaud them as they change shifts every night—an act that brings isolated New Yorkers together.

More than that, this Congress, this Senate, must deliver the people of our country relief. We have come together on several occasions to pass historic legislation in this time of crisis. They passed 96 to 0, which shows that this body can come together in a time of crisis, which should give Americans some hope and some solace. Let me be very clear. Our work is far from over.

The Republican leader has called the Senate back into session despite the fact that the District of Columbia appears to be reaching the peak phase of this public health emergency, despite the risks we face by gathering here in the Capitol, despite the risks faced by security guards, cafeteria workers, janitors, and the staff who operate the floor of the Senate. I want to take a moment to thank each and every one of them—and all of those Capitol Hill workers—for being here today, for doing their jobs so that we may do ours.

If we are going to be here, if we are going to make these fine people come into work in these conditions, let the Senate at least conduct the Nation's business and focus like a laser on COVID-19. At the moment, the Republican leader has scheduled no significant COVID-related business for the floor of the Senate. Tonight, we will vote on a nomination to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. Later this week, the Republican majority on the Judiciary Committee will hold a hearing for a manifestly unqualified, totally divisive, rightwing judicial nominee.

When the topic of COVID-related legislation has come up, Leader McCONNELL has simply drawn partisan lines in the sand. First, he has suggested that States and localities should go bankrupt—let them go bankrupt. He has since realized his mistake and walked that back. But then, only a few days later, the leader vowed to block any bill that does not include legal immunity for big corporations that operate unsafely and put workers in harm's way.

The Republican leader said that his redline in a future relief package is not a national testing program; it is not more help for small businesses or housing assistance for families; it is not rescuing our healthcare system. Leader McCONNELL will not support new legislation to fight this evil disease unless