



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 116th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 166

WASHINGTON, MONDAY, MAY 11, 2020

No. 88

House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 12, 2020, at 12 p.m.

Senate

MONDAY, MAY 11, 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.

Marvelous Redeemer, You alone are God, keeping Your covenant with humanity throughout the generations.

Bless our Senators. Enable them to find shelter in the shadow of Your wings. Lord, bless their plans as they seek to do Your will on Earth, and empower them to succeed. Use them to bring comfort and healing to a troubled nation and world. Keep them aware of the constancy of Your presence, inspiring them to give primacy to prayer and praise as they work for Your glory.

We pray in Your majestic 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 speak for 1 minute in morning business.

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

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, the pandemic has disrupted just about everything Americans take for granted in life, including our food supply. Empty grocery store shelves have greeted U.S. consumers, perhaps for the first time in their lifetimes. The pandemic shines a national spotlight on the “farm to fork” supply chain. Market disruptions are forcing farmers to make tough choices—milk being dumped, eggs destroyed, and market-ready hogs may have nowhere to go. Farmers are shouldering a heavy burden, with profound impact to their livelihood and mental health.

As a champion for American agriculture, I am leading efforts to help our farmers get through these tough times. There is a lot of help coming from other people as well.

As always, Iowa pork producers want to do what they do best, which is put food on our tables. They are teaming up with local meat lockers and food banks to do what is called Pass the Pork, a statewide initiative launched by Iowa Governor Reynolds. The Pass the Pork Program aims to stock food pantries with hogs donated by local farmers and from financial contributions to cover the costs of processing and distribution. Where there is a will, there is a way. We all know it.

I salute Iowans pulling together the Iowa Way.

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 for its second week in session, and we have more important work to do for the American people.

While our Nation fights the coronavirus pandemic, many of our fellow Americans have been taking new safety precautions but continue to show up to perform essential work. Because of delivery drivers and grocery clerks, families can keep food on their shelves. Because of utility workers, people hunkered down at home have power. Because of pharmacists manning their counters, Americans have been able to keep getting the medicines they need so this health crisis does not compound itself. Then, of course, there has been the selfless work of so many doctors, nurses, and other healthcare professionals.

Frankly, even the word “essential” does not do full justice to all the new American heroes we have met these past weeks.

In my home State of Kentucky, we met people like Leilani Krause. She is a 30-year nursing veteran who now oversees care at a senior living facility in Louisville. A few weeks ago, she herself contracted the coronavirus. Even as she stayed home to recover, she never stopped working. She still did all she could to coordinate her patients’ care over video calls. As soon as she

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



Printed on recycled paper.

S2331

felt better and doctors gave her the all-clear, she checked right back into work right on the frontlines.

I want to thank all of my Senate colleagues as we continue to perform our essential responsibilities to serve citizens like Miss Krause and so many other American heroes all across our country. Of course, much of the work before us relates to the pandemic itself. Our committees of jurisdiction are attacking COVID-19 and its effects from every angle.

This week, Chairman ALEXANDER and our colleagues on the HELP Committee will hold a major hearing on smart and safe ways for Americans to get back to work and back to school. They will hear expert testimony from the very top leaders: Dr. Fauci, Dr. Redfield, Dr. Hahn, and Admiral Giroir from HHS.

Chairman CRAPO and the Banking Committee will hear from representatives from the Federal Reserve and the FDIC on financial regulation. Obviously, that is an essential topic as the government continues to push out billions and billions of dollars in emergency liquidity following the CARES Act.

With huge numbers of Americans working, teaching, and learning from home and with telemedicine more important than ever, the Commerce Committee will hear from experts about access to broadband internet during the crisis.

The Judiciary Committee will hold an important hearing on issues of legal liability during this unprecedented time. It is crucial that as we continue to fight the pandemic itself, we ensure it is not followed up by a second job-killing epidemic of frivolous lawsuits. This would be just about the worst time in living memory to let trial lawyers line their pockets at the expense of the rest of our country. The Senate is going to play a strong role in ensuring that does not happen.

While our committees are working away, here on the floor, we will start this week by confirming two more qualified nominees to important posts that should not remain empty at this time. We will begin with Brian Montgomery of Texas, named by President Trump to serve as Deputy Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. Then we will turn to Troy Edgar of California to be Chief Financial Officer at the Department of Homeland Security.

I understand some of my distinguished Democratic colleagues complain that the full Senate should not have to spend more time on these sorts of uncontroversial executive branch nominees. I agree. But as long as their own Democratic leadership continues to hold important posts open for as long as possible in order to just spite the White House, as long as the minority continues to break from longstanding Senate precedent to obstruct even the least controversial nominees, then, frankly, they will have to continue to show up and vote on them. The floor votes they say they dislike are the direct result of their own tactics.

We are also going to take up important legislation this week. While COVID-19 rightly dominates headlines around the world, the United States of America also faced many serious threats before this virus began to spread, and they are still with us today.

Later this week, we will turn back to reauthorizing important authorities under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act. This is urgent because the House refused to take up the Senate's short-term extension of important counterterrorism and counterintelligence authorities before they left town. House Democrats let these tools expire, so we must act quickly to clean up their mess and renew these authorities, which our government needs to fight terrorists and check the agents of China and Russia.

The bipartisan bill we will take up was negotiated exhaustively by House Republicans and the Attorney General of the United States. Determined advocates for reform after the shameful abuses of 2016 sat down with determined defenders of the good parts of these tools, and they hammered out a strong compromise. The legislation will introduce more daylight and more accountability into the FISA process where appropriate, but it will ensure that the embarrassments of 2016 do not jeopardize these essential national security tools altogether.

I hope the Senate will be able to dispatch the amendments that we will consider and pass this important legislation on a bipartisan basis to keep the American people safe.

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 Brian D. Montgomery, of Texas, to be Deputy Secretary of Housing and Urban Development.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, 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 PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, the United States has well over a million confirmed cases of COVID-19. We are quickly, unfortunately, approaching 80,000 fatalities.

Alongside this great crisis of public health, this shocking and heart-breaking loss of life, there is a looming economic catastrophe. There are now more than 30 million newly unemployed Americans, over one-tenth of the population in the United States and the highest number since the Great Depression. Many believe this number underestimates the real total.

Once this crisis is over, there is no guarantee that these millions of newly unemployed Americans will be able to resume their old jobs. How many people will find new jobs? At what salary? Even the most optimistic scenarios predict a period of extended high unemployment. Others suggest we are looking at the kernels of a second Great Depression.

Here on the Senate floor, for the second week in a row, we are living in the alternative reality of Republican Leader MCCONNELL's making. He has scheduled no legislative business here on the floor related to COVID-19—none—no measures for the unemployed, no relief for renters or homeowners, no legislation to increase testing capacity, no proposals to help State and local governments retain teachers, firefighters, busdrivers, and police officers.

Looking at the Senate calendar, you would never know that we are working in the midst of a national crisis. It looks like any other session—a few executive nominations, hearings on rightwing judges, and legislation from previous months that the leader should not have delayed. It is just totally, totally divorced from reality.

Despite the obvious health risks, Senators are ready to do our jobs. Why don't we actually do our jobs and focus on COVID-19? For the sake of common sense and the good of the Nation, the Senate should be focused on COVID-19. We should be holding multiple serious oversight hearings every week. Several of my colleagues on the other side, including the Republican leader, have said they want to see how the legislation we have already passed is working before doing anything else. At the same time, the Republican majority is slow-walking the hearing process.

Finally, after a lot of Democratic pressure from myself and many others, the leader is sort of eking out, week by week, hearings. We have just heard that we will hear from Powell and Mnuchin on the 19th. That will be almost 2 months after a bill that let \$4 trillion of lending authority be released before there is a hearing.

Why didn't we hold a hearing 3 weeks ago, 5 weeks ago, or last week? It is