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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Friday, May 22, 2020, at 11 a.m.

Senate

THURSDAY, MAY 21, 2020

The Senate met at 10 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.

Lord of our lives, make these moments of prayer more than mere words, but may this reverent pause fill our hearts with gratitude and love for You. May our lawmakers appreciate the fact that through prayer, they have the privilege of talking to You, the superintendent of the universe.

Lord, inspire them to use this intercessory opportunity to seek Your wisdom and guidance, knowing that You are eager to help them. Give us all the wisdom to remember that You continue to be our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble.

And Lord, as we approach Memorial Day, thank You for the men and women who gave their lives for this Nation while serving in the U.S. military. We are grateful also for the great sacrifices made by their loved ones.

We pray in Your merciful 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 (Mrs. HYDE-SMITH). The Senator from Iowa.

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

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

NIGERIA

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, we all ought to be very concerned, as I am, about the ongoing religious persecution happening in Nigeria. It may be happening in a lot of countries, but I just want to mention Nigeria today.

In the last 6 months, there have been multiple attacks. This includes the murder of 11 Christians by extremists identified as part of ISIS, and—can you believe it—the beheading of a pastor by Boko Haram militants. West Africa released a barbaric video of a child of about 10 years old executing a Christian.

The Nigerian authorities need to stop this persecution right now, and our own government, the U.S. Government, needs to do what it can to support that effort. For sure, those responsible must be held accountable for their actions.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

BUSINESS BEFORE THE SENATE

Mr. McCONNELL. All month, the Senate has been on the job attending to the needs of our country. We legis-

lated, we confirmed nominees, we held major hearings, and conducted oversight on the historic response to COVID-19.

Yesterday, we learned that our Senate action will continue to contrast with our absentee neighbors across the Rotunda. While essential workers across the country continue to clock in, the Democratic House of Representatives has essentially put itself on paid leave for months. Since the early days of this crisis, the self-described “People’s House” has been suspiciously empty of people. I understand they have convened for legislative session a grand total of 2 days in the last 8 weeks. At this point, I am wondering if we should send Senators over there to collect their newspaper and water the plants.

It is not just their physical absence; it is House Democrats absent from any serious discussions at all. About the only product to emerge from their lengthy sabbatical has been a 1,800-page, \$3 trillion messaging bill that couldn’t even unite their own conference.

Yesterday, the Speaker announced this arrangement will continue for another 45 days at least, but there is a new wrinkle. House Democrats jammed through a precedent-breaking remote voting scheme that will let 1 Member cast 10 additional votes—1 Member cast 10 additional votes. Actually, 1 person, 11 votes. Remember, these are the people who want to remake every State’s election laws.

There are several problems with this. One of them happens to be article I, section 5 of the U.S. Constitution,

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



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which says a majority of each House shall constitute a quorum to do business. For about 231 years, Congress has managed to fulfill this job requirement. They worked through a Civil War, two World Wars, terrorist threats, and a major pandemic without trying to shirk this duty. The 12th Congress endured the War of 1812, including the occupation of Washington and the burning of this very building that we are in right now without abandoning in-person meetings.

The Constitution requires a physical quorum to do business. Normally, both Chambers may presume one. But any House Member has a right to demand an in-person attendance check. The Democrats' new rule says one person may mark himself and 10 others present, even if they are nowhere in sight, which is a flatout lie.

There will be enormous constitutional questions around anything the House does if they fail to demonstrate a real quorum, but plow ahead anyhow. They have had 2 normal workdays in 8 weeks and one absurd, unserious proposal. And now they are playing games with the Constitution so they can continue their never-ending spring break well into July.

Let's come over here to the Senate. In the past 3 weeks, we have filled crucial posts at the National Counterintelligence and Security Center, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, and the Department of Homeland Security.

Today, we will confirm the next Director of National Intelligence. JOHN RATCLIFFE will lead the intelligence community in countering threats from great powers, rogue nations, and terrorists, and ensuring that work is untainted by political bias.

The Banking Committee heard from Chairman Powell and Secretary Mnuchin on the workings of the CARES Act and the state of our economy. The Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee has reported the nominee to be Special Inspector General for Pandemic Recovery Programs.

The Special Committee on Aging is examining all the ways this crisis has hurt America's seniors.

The HELP Committee has discussed with top experts like Dr. Fauci and Admiral Giroir how schools, universities, and businesses will begin to reopen.

Senator CORNYN and I are working on legal protections that our healthcare workers deserve and institutions will need if they want to return to anything reassembling normal.

On the floor, we have passed major bills, renewing key national security tools and dialing up the consequences for Communist China's abuse of human rights.

In short, the Senate has just followed the lead of the American people. For months now, healthcare workers have been clocking in to help and heal strangers. Every minute on the job is an act of selflessness and bravery. Families have forged new routines and

set up home offices and home schools overnight. Community volunteers have found new ways to pitch in and help the vulnerable from 6 feet apart.

Tens of millions of workers have kept collecting paychecks instead of pink slips because of our Paycheck Protection Program, which sent hundreds of billions of dollars to keep small businesses alive.

COVID-19 has killed nearly 100,000 Americans. It has cost tens of millions their jobs. This is a generational tragedy. But in the midst of it, our country is pulling together.

My home State of Kentucky is showing us how it is done. A glass producer transformed its operation to make protective shields for businesses. A high school principal, Evan Jackson, invented a virtual commencement so graduates didn't go uncelebrated. Dr. Erin Frazier, a pediatrician, somehow found the spare time to stand up brandnew food pantries. Restaurants are spreading hope and hospitality by donating meals to first responders.

And one group of restaurants headquartered in Louisville called Texas Roadhouse has gone to great lengths to avoid layoffs. The founder gave up his salary and put his own money into a worker assistance fund. So far they have spent \$17 million on their workers, covering everything from healthcare premiums to bonuses.

These past few months have been trying indeed, but the American people have been truly inspiring. This spring, the Senate wrote and passed the largest rescue package in American history to try to help bridge this period. This Nation of nearly 330 million people put their lives on pause to protect our medical system, and it worked.

The American people did what Americans do: They got it done. We kept our healthcare system intact; we did not let this virus break us; and as far as we know, not one single American who needed a ventilator could not get one. We have not yet won the war, but the citizens of this Nation have won an important battle.

What comes next? Sustaining this flattened curve will take vigilance. Safely reopening schools, universities, and businesses will take care and leadership. The race for even more testing, therapeutics, and of course a vaccine will be one great national project.

Rebuilding the prosperity we had just a few months ago will be another. Life will not go right back to normal. Repairing the damage will take creativity. But the greatest country in world history will find a more sustainable middle ground.

Every one of my Senate colleagues should be proud of how we helped our Nation win this battle. Every day, our historic rescue package has continued to push out money and aid. Every day, we are working on ways to smooth the road toward reopening that lies before us.

The American people have already been heroes. It is our honor as Senators to stand with them.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—S.J. RES. 72

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the actions of the Senate with respect to S.J. Res. 72 be vitiated.

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

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 senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of JOHN L. RATCLIFFE, of Texas, to be Director of National Intelligence.

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, 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.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, one unfortunate side effect of the COVID-19 pandemic is that we have become accustomed to the recitation of grim statistics.

The United States now leads the world in the number of confirmed cases of the coronavirus with more than 1.5 million. Another 2.4 million workers filed jobless claims this week, joining the more than 38 million Americans who have applied for unemployment assistance since the crisis began.

Very soon, our country will reach another grim milestone. We are fast approaching the day when more than 100,000 American lives will be lost to COVID-19—the size of a small city erased from the map.

Speaker PELOSI and I sent a letter to President Trump this morning, requesting that the American flag be flown at half-mast on all public buildings on the day the toll reaches 100,000. As families all across this great country mourn the loss of friends, colleagues, and loved ones, flying the flag