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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Thursday, June 18, 2020, at 10 a.m.

Senate

TUESDAY, JUNE 16, 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.

Eternal God, have mercy upon this land we love. We place our total trust in You to do for us what we can't do for ourselves. You have delivered us in the past. You have not failed us. Our faith is in You. Lord, inspire our Senators to know that You are still on your throne, working for the good of those who love You. Listen to our prayers, and give us wisdom, courage, and integrity that will enable us to glorify You.

We pray in Your wonderful 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.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, too often, Americans are cynical about

our political system when all they see is legislative gridlock. Yet Iowans were able to set themselves apart by working together on law enforcement reforms in the wake of George Floyd's murder.

Every step of the way, the Iowa process was fueled by input from the grassroots, including those who demonstrated peacefully. The Republican-led statehouse and senate partnered with the Democrats to unanimously pass reforms in our State—some of them historic reforms. Governor Reynolds signed House File 2647 to bring additional accountability to Iowa's law enforcement officers.

These are some of the things that they did: created stronger restrictions on the use of choke holds by law enforcement officers; improved the law enforcement decertification process to ensure that those who have been fired or who resign after serious misconduct do not work in our State; strengthened the authority of the Iowa attorney general to prosecute officers whose actions result in the death of another; established annual anti-bias and deescalation training requirements for officers.

We are working on some of these very same policies here on the Federal level. Washington should follow Iowa's example and pass legislation to help correct wrongs and inspire positive change in our communities across the country. Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM will be leading hearings today on this issue before the Committee on the Judiciary. Hopefully, we can act.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

NOMINATION OF JUSTIN REED WALKER

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, this week, like most weeks for a month and a half now, has brought a study in contrasts to the U.S. Capitol. Over in the Democratic-led House of Representatives, the lights are off. The doors are locked. There is nobody home.

With our country facing a once-in-a-century pandemic, a historic economic disruption, a major discussion of racial justice, and all of the other important business we were already set to tackle this year before all of this, the Speaker of the House has mostly kept her Chamber on the longest running spring break in human history—lots of talk about supposed priorities but few votes; lots of partisan attacks leveled at the Republicans from a distance but little action. Over here in the Senate, the story has been very different. We are holding hearings. We are legislating. We are confirming nominees. With precautions, we are manning our posts for the country.

Tomorrow, the Senate will begin considering the President's nomination of Judge Justin Walker to fill a vacancy on the DC Circuit—the second most important Federal bench in the country.

As my fellow Kentuckians and I can attest, Judge Walker is exactly the kind of individual our country deserves

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



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to have in such a role. He graduated from Duke summa cum laude and then from Harvard Law magna cum laude. He clerked on the DC Circuit himself for an impressive young judge named Brett Kavanaugh and then on the Supreme Court.

He has built a national reputation as a leading academic scholar of the law. It is no wonder that even the ABA rates him “well qualified.” He has quickly made a name for himself as a district judge.

A few weeks ago, when the mayor of Louisville tried to cancel drive-in Easter services with disparate restrictions that did not apply equally to other parking lots, Judge Walker won national attention for his eloquent defense of religious liberty. This subject becomes more important by the day. The American people deserve to have strong respect for their First Amendment rights, including their rights of religious exercise and conscience, on one of our country's highest courts. So I look forward to continuing to detail our Kentucky pride for Judge Walker as this week unfolds, and I will take great pride in voting to advance his nomination and to confirm him.

GREAT AMERICAN OUTDOORS ACT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, the Senate will first pass the Great American Outdoors Act. It will be a big step in the history of our Nation's public lands and great news for their future.

This bill is the product of a lot of hard work by many of our colleagues on both sides of the aisle. It has two clear purposes: It will restore access and function to parks and facilities that have been neglected, and it will secure a stable flow of resources to support recreation and conservation well into the future.

I have detailed in recent days just how many Americans rely on our Nation's public lands—from the guides and outfitters who cater to the booming outdoor recreation economy; to the hotel workers, restaurant owners, and gateway communities that welcome hundreds of millions of annual visitors; to the researchers who study historic sites and unique habitats; to the hunters, anglers, sportsmen, and American families who explore millions of acres of open space.

It is clear that a bright economic future for America is intertwined with this precious resource, so backlogged maintenance and delayed upkeep are a real problem. Too often, tough budgetary choices have left important facilities worn down and natural treasures inaccessible. I am proud that this legislation before us will tackle these critical missions, but you certainly don't have to take my word for it; you can look to the list of no fewer than 60 cosponsors on both sides of the aisle or to the 80 Senators who voted to advance consideration of the bill last week, or you could sample from the

ringing endorsements of an impressive cross-section of American recreation and conservation advocates.

Take, for example, the letter the Democratic leader and I received from the last six former Secretaries of the Interior. Men and women who served under Presidents of both parties came together to tell us that “the Great American Outdoors Act will help ensure a better, brighter future for nature and for all of us.”

Hundreds of advocacy organizations, from the Sierra Club to the American Sportfishing Association, also approve. They say the bill “will ensure that our parks and other public lands continue to preserve our nation's heritage and recreation opportunities, and that local communities and economies . . . will continue to flourish.”

It is not often that we are presented with the opportunity to take overwhelmingly bipartisan action that will affect a monumental part of American life for so many years to come, and the opportunity in front of us this week comes thanks to the dedicated work of several of our colleagues.

In particular, I would like to thank Senator DAINES and Senator GARDNER once again for their extraordinary leadership. I look forward to seeing their efforts across the finish line, and I urge all Members to join me in supporting this bill and securing our natural wonders for generations of Americans yet to come.

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.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

TAXPAYER FIRST ACT OF 2019— Resumed

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 1957, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 1957) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to modernize and improve the Internal Revenue Service, and for other purposes.

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.

BOSTOCK V. CLAYTON COUNTY, GEORGIA

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, yesterday, the Supreme Court ruled that the Civil Rights Act of 1964 does, in fact, prohibit employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. It was a landmark decision that represents a step forward—a big step forward—on the long march to full equality for LGBTQ Americans. We salute that decision. That is what the Supreme Court should be doing—moving us in a direction of equality and fairness. All too often, it doesn't these days. So this was a refreshing breath of fresh air from that Court.

The march, of course, is not over. Yesterday's decision, welcomed as it is, reminds us that, even today, even in 2020, we have so much work left to do to advance the cause of justice and equality for all Americans. Only a few days ago, our laws didn't clearly establish that you couldn't be fired by your employer simply because of who you are and whom you love. Yesterday's decision is not the end of the fight. It was one step forward. If it is wrong to discriminate against people because of whom they love and because of who they are and if it is wrong to discriminate against people on the basis of sexual orientation and gender, isn't it wrong on the job? If it is wrong to discriminate against people on the basis of sexual orientation and gender on employment, isn't it wrong on housing? Isn't it wrong on so many other issues?

That is why we need the Equality Act to pass. The decision is certainly not the end of the fight. Disparities and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity still exist in so many aspects of our lives—education, housing, credit, public spaces, services, and in many other ways. If it is wrong to discriminate against people because of their sexual orientation and gender on jobs and employment, it is equally wrong in these other areas like housing and education. We need to pass the Equality Act, which expands the prohibition of discrimination to many other needed areas.

Today, Senate Democrats will send a letter from our caucus to Leader MCCONNELL urging him to schedule the Equality Act for a vote on the floor. The House passed it a year ago. It has been languishing in MCCONNELL's legislative graveyard. I would say to my Republican colleagues: If some of the most conservative people around, like Justice Gorsuch and Justice Roberts, can come to the conclusion that we should stop discriminating, where are you? The Senate Republicans only seem 30 years behind the times on this issue for sure.

I urge the leader to put the Equality Act on the floor now, and let's extend what the Supreme Court did in terms