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Senate

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, our hearts are steadfast toward You. Lead us safely to the refuge of Your choosing, for You desire to give us a future and a hope.

Lord, provide us with grateful hearts to appreciate Your mercies that are new each day. Today, give our Senators the power to do Your will as they realize more fully that they are servants of Heaven and stewards of Your mysteries. Give them perspectives on their daily tasks and every decision they must make. Remind them that people usually don't care how much You know until they know how much You care.

May faithfulness to You become the litmus test by which our lawmakers evaluate each action.

We pray in Your powerful 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 address the Senate for 1 minute in morning business.

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

IOWA GRADUATIONS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, once again, I am proud to come to tell you something about the history of

Iowa, and I do this during a hectic time of the COVID-19 crisis. That crisis has had, for American educational systems, quite an impact. So, at this time, it is important to highlight some successes.

The 2018-2019 school year saw the highest 4-year graduation rate in Iowa's history, and that percentage was at 91.6 percent. In 2017, Iowa had the highest graduation rate in the entire country, and with this achievement, we appear ready to do it again.

During my time representing Iowa in the U.S. Senate, I had been in many of our State's classrooms and have seen firsthand the dedication of Iowa's educators. I congratulate all of those involved with Iowa schools on their fantastic work and congratulate them for doing it at all times, even over the past few months, in particular, because of all the situations they have run into because of the virus pandemic.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

ISSUES FACING AMERICA

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, the Senate has been confronting issues of historic importance on the homefront.

Just since March, we sent historic resources to the healthcare fight against COVID-19 on an overwhelming bipartisan basis. We passed the largest rescue package in American history on a bipartisan basis. We just passed a generational bill for our public lands, also on a bipartisan basis.

Yesterday, the junior Senator from South Carolina introduced a major proposal to reform policing and promote racial justice. If our colleagues across the aisle can put politics aside and join us in a real discussion, then on this issue, too, we should be able to make law on a bipartisan basis.

The Senate has led and is leading the way toward serious solutions. At the same time, developments around the world continue to remind us that the safety and interests of the American people are also threatened from beyond our shores. Just 2 weeks ago, I explained how the Chinese Communist Party has used the pandemic they helped worsen as a smokescreen for ratcheting up their oppression in Hong Kong and advancing their control and influence throughout the region. It hasn't stopped.

At sea, they have stepped up their menacing of Japan near the Senkaku Islands. In the skies, Chinese jets have intruded into Taiwanese airspace four separate times in a matter of days. On land, for the sake of grabbing territory, the PLA appears to have instigated the worst violent clash between China and India since those nations went to war way back in 1962.

Needless to say, the rest of the world has watched with grave concern this violent exchange between two nuclear states. We are encouraging deescalation and hoping for peace. The world could not have received a clearer reminder that the PRC is dead set on brutalizing people within their own borders—challenging and remaking the international order anew in their image, to include literally redrawing world maps. Of course, this is not exactly breaking news to any of us who have been paying attention.

Earlier this year, the Senate passed legislation to give the administration new tools to directly punish the CCP for its egregious—egregious treatment of the Uighur people and the modern-day gulags it has constructed there in the Xinjiang Province. The President signed it into law yesterday.

Going back to the United States-Hong Kong Policy Act, which I wrote back in 1992, the Senate has maintained a keen interest in the freedom and autonomy of our friends in that city. Unfortunately, Beijing has continued to tighten its grip there as well.

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



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More and more Hongkongers find themselves facing an agonizing decision: Can they remain in the city they love or must they flee elsewhere if they want their children to grow up free?

As I have said often, every nation that cares about democracy and stability has a stake in ensuring that Beijing's actions in Hong Kong carry consequences. I encourage the administration to use the tools Congress has given it and to work with like-minded nations to impose those costs, but punishing the PRC cannot be our only priority. We also need to actively help the people of Hong Kong.

Led by Prime Minister Boris Johnson, the United Kingdom says they are preparing to offer visas to potentially millions of Hongkongers. In addition to funding democracy programming and supporting legal assistance, we must also consider ways to welcome Hongkongers and other Chinese dissidents to America.

Chinese Americans have formed part of the backbone of our Nation for about two centuries. Against headwinds of racial prejudice, Chinese immigrants literally helped build modern America as we know it. Generations of Chinese Americans have enriched our society and fueled our economic prosperity. Not surprisingly, I am particularly partial to the Secretary of Transportation, whose parents fled Communist rule. She has served her country across four Presidential administrations, including as the first Chinese American to ever serve in a President's Cabinet.

If some of the same brave Hongkongers who have stood up for liberty waving our American flag and singing our American national anthem would like to come here and join us, we should welcome them warmly.

Of course, this Senate is not only acting with respect to China. Earlier this year, at my urging, the Senate enacted the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act, and this week, the administration is using these tools to impose painful new sanctions on the brutal regime of Bashar Assad.

With the help of Russian airpower, Iranian advisers, and manpower from Hezbollah terrorists, Assad has recaptured military control of most of the territory he had lost during 9 years of civil war, but he has effectively destroyed his own country in an effort to save his regime.

Assad faces renewed protests across the country, infighting within his regime and family, and a Syrian economy that is in free fall. Because of this Congress and this administration, the cashflow to these butchers is going to shrink, and the price that leaders and businessmen in Tehran, Beirut, Cairo, Moscow, and Beijing will have to pay to do business with the regime will grow.

These new steps will help us achieve our objective: creating leverage for diplomats and our partners on the ground to negotiate a political solution and finally end the war. To maintain this

pressure, we should keep our limited physical presence in Syria. We should work to bring our NATO ally Turkey back onto the right side, and we should preserve the deterrence that President Trump has rebuilt against Iran, to keep checking their influence in Syria and throughout the Middle East.

NOMINATION OF JUSTIN REED WALKER

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, on one final matter, later today, the Senate will confirm Judge Justin Walker of Kentucky to join the DC Circuit Court of Appeals.

Now, as I have noted in just the last several weeks, Judge Walker has given the Senate several new reasons to support his nomination to the second most important Federal bench.

In testimony before our colleagues on the Judiciary Committee, he demonstrated an impressive grasp of legal precedent. At his current post as district judge for the Western District of Kentucky, he eloquently applied this understanding to uphold Americans' religious liberty, and he earned the approval of the American Bar Association with a rating of "well-qualified."

But, of course, Judge Walker's credentials were already sterling. Long before this nominee began practicing and then applying the law, he was collecting plaudits for his excellence at studying it.

Judge Walker, as I mentioned before, graduated from Duke University summa cum laude, and Harvard Law School magna cum laude. Those credentials can easily lead someone to an elite law firm in a big city, but instead, it led Judge Walker to clerkships for then-Judge Brett Kavanaugh and then-Justice Anthony Kennedy.

He then went back home to the University of Louisville Law School. He quickly became a star faculty member, producing distinguished scholarship on a wide range of legal issues. Once Judge Walker took his current seat on the bench for the Western District of Kentucky, he wasted no time building an equally strong reputation for the fairness and open-mindedness that Americans deserve from their judges.

In one letter to our colleagues on the Judiciary Committee, 100 practicing lawyers from across Kentucky said:

If Judge Walker is confirmed, we could give our clients an assessment of him for which any judge should strive: he is sharp, fair, and will follow the law.

In another letter, 16 different State attorneys general told us:

As someone from outside the Beltway with a commitment to the rule of law, we know that Judge Walker will listen to the arguments of advocates appearing before him, that he will weigh the facts against the law as it is written (and not as he wishes it to be), and that he will fairly decide those cases based upon controlling precedent.

These glowing assessments are not from elite corporate counsel or frequent flyers on the DC Circuit. These

are from men and women across Kentucky and across America who have seen this man work and watched his career.

Republican Presidents have a proud tradition of looking beyond Washington to freshen up the DC Circuit with diverse perspectives from across America. President Nixon thought this crucial court could use the expertise of a Texan and a Minnesotan. President Reagan chose legal minds from Colorado and North Carolina. President Bush 41 chose a South Carolinian, and President Bush 43 a Californian.

So when the Senate confirms Judge Walker to this vacancy, we will not just be promoting a widely admired legal expert and proven judge to a role for which he is obviously qualified, we will also be adding to a time-honored tradition of finding men and women from all across the country to help ensure that this enormously consequential bench here in our Nation's Capital is refreshed with talent from all parts of America.

My fellow Kentuckians and I are sorry to part with this son in the Bluegrass, but mostly we are proud because Judge Walker will be putting his legal brilliance and his exceptional judicial temperament to work not just for his home State but for our entire Nation and in even more consequential ways. I look forward to voting to confirm Judge Justin Walker, and I urge each of my colleagues to do the same.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 3985

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I understand there is a bill at the desk that is 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 (S. 3985) to improve and reform policing practices, accountability, and transparency.

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam 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.