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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 Father, our souls long for You, for we find strength and joy in Your presence.

Guide our lawmakers to put their trust in You, seeking in every undertaking to know and do Your will. When they go through difficulties, may they remember that, with Your help, they can accomplish the seemingly impossible. Lord, give them a faith that will trust you even when the darkness is blacker than a thousand midnights. May they always find strength in Your providential meaning.

We pray in Your strong 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. BLACKBURN). The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for 30 seconds in morning business.

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

JUDICIAL CONFIRMATIONS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, the Senate will soon cross the milestone of 200 judicial confirmations since President Trump came to the Presidency in 2017. These have been nominees in the molds of Justice Scalia, just as the President promised nearly 4 years ago. They will strictly interpret the Constitution and Federal

statutes. Their decisions will be driven by what the law actually says, not their own personal policy preferences.

This landmark achievement is the result of the President keeping his word and the unwavering determination of Leader McCONNELL, Chairman GRAHAM, and the Republican conference.

In the hands of these many strict constructionist judges, the future of American jurisprudence is very, very bright.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

JUDICIAL CONFIRMATIONS

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, in a few hours, the Senate will confirm Judge Cory T. Wilson to join the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit. Yet again, President Trump has sent up an outstanding nominee for this important vacancy. Judge Wilson holds degrees from the University of Mississippi and Yale Law School. He has held a prestigious clerkship, found success in private practice, and spent years in public service as a lawyer and a judge. The American Bar Association rates Mr. Wilson "well qualified."

Once we confirm Judge Wilson today, the Senate will have confirmed 200—200—of President Trump's nominees to lifetime appointments on the Federal bench. Following No. 200, when we depart this Chamber today, there will not be a single circuit court vacancy anywhere in the Nation for the first time in at least 40 years. There will not be a single circuit court vacancy anywhere in the Nation for the first time in at least 40 years.

As I have said many times, our work with the administration to renew our Federal courts is not a partisan or political victory; it is a victory for the

rule of law and for the Constitution itself.

If judges applying the law and the Constitution as they are written strikes any of our colleagues as a threat to their political agenda, then the problem, I would argue, is with their agenda.

THE JUSTICE ACT

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, on another matter, today was supposed to bring progress for an issue that is weighing heavily on the minds of Americans. In the wake of the killings of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd, following weeks of passionate protests from coast to coast, the Senate was supposed to officially take up police reform on the floor today. Instead, our Democratic colleagues are poised to turn this routine step into a partisan impasse.

Frankly, to most Americans, the situation would sound like a satire of what goes on in the Senate: a heated argument over whether to invoke cloture on a motion to proceed to a proposal—a heated argument over whether to invoke cloture on a motion to proceed to a proposal. We are literally arguing about whether to stop arguing about whether to start arguing about something else.

I can stand here for an hour and extol the virtues of Senator TIM SCOTT's JUSTICE Act. His legislation has already earned 48 cosponsors because it is a straightforward plan based on facts, based on data, and based on lived experience. It focuses on improving accountability and restoring trust. It addresses key issues like choke holds and no-knock warrants. It expands reporting, transparency in hiring, and training for deescalation.

I am proud to stand with this legislation, but the reality is that nobody thought the first offer from the Republican side was going to be the final product that traveled out of the Senate. What is supposed to happen in this

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



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body is that we vote or agree to get onto a bill, and then we discuss, debate, and amend it until at least 60 Senators are satisfied, or it goes nowhere. It goes nowhere at the end until 60 Senators are satisfied.

So what are they giving up? Nothing. They don't want an outcome. The vote we will take in a few hours is just the first step. We aren't passing a bill. We aren't making policy decisions. It is just a procedural vote to say that police reform is the subject the Senate will tackle next. That is all it says—that police reform is the subject the Senate will tackle next.

Alas, our Democratic colleagues have suddenly begun to signal they are not willing to even begin the discussion on police reform. They are threatening to block the subject from even reaching the Senate floor.

Yesterday, in a letter to me and on the floor, the Democratic leader and the junior Senators from New Jersey and California put forward an argument that was almost nonsensical. First, they explained a number of policy differences they have with Senator SCOTT's proposal. No problem there. The Senate has a handy tool for settling such differences; it is called legislating. We take up bills. We debate them. We consider amendments from both sides. And only if and when 60 Senators are satisfied can we even vote on passage.

But this time, Senate Democrats say the legislative process should not happen. This time, the Democratic leader is saying he will not let the Senate take up the subject of police reform at all—at all—unless I pre-negotiate with him in private and rewrite our starting point until he is satisfied.

This last-minute ultimatum is particularly ironic given the weeks of rhetoric from leading Democrats about how very urgent—how very urgent—it was that Congress address police reform and racial justice. For weeks, the Democratic leader has blustered that the Senate simply had to address this issue before July 4. Well, that is what the vote this morning is about.

Last week, Speaker PELOSI said: "I hope there's a compromise to be reached in the Congress. . . ." because "How many more people have to die from police brutality?" So, as recently as last week, leading Democrats called it a life-or-death issue for the Senate to take up the subject this month. Well, here we are. Here we are. We are ready to address it. But now, in the last 48 hours, this bizarre, new ultimatum. Now they don't want to take up the issue. They don't want to debate. They don't want amendments. They will filibuster police reform from even reaching the floor of the Senate unless the majority lets the minority rewrite the bill behind closed doors in advance. Let me say that again. They will filibuster police reform from even reaching the floor unless the majority lets the minority rewrite the bill behind closed doors in advance.

Yesterday, the Speaker of the House told CBS News that because Senate Republicans do support Senator TIM SCOTT's reform bill, we are all—listen to this jaw-dropping comment—"trying to get away with murder . . . the murder of George Floyd." That is the Speaker of the House accusing Senate Republicans of trying to get away with murder.

Are you beginning to see how this game works? Two weeks ago, it was implied the Senate would have blood on our hands if we didn't take up police reform. Now Democrats say Senator SCOTT and 48 other Senators have blood on our hands because we are trying to take up police reform.

What fascinating times we live in. Armies of elites and Twitter mobs stand ready to pounce on any speech they deem problematic. Yet unhinged comments like these get a complete free pass—a complete free pass.

When our country needs unity, they are trying to keep us apart. When our Nation needs bipartisan solutions, they are staging partisan theater. This is political nonsense elevated to an art form.

In a body that has amendments and substitute amendments, it is nonsense to say a police reform bill cannot be the starting point for a police reform bill. It is nonsense for Democrats to say that, because they want to change Senator SCOTT's bill, they are going to block the Senate from taking it up and amending it. If they are confident in their positions, they should embrace the amendment process. If they aren't confident their views will persuade others, that just underscores why they don't get to insert these views in advance—in advance—behind closed doors.

No final legislation can pass without 60 votes. If Democrats do not like the final product, it will not pass. The only way there is any downside for Democrats to come to the table is that they would rather preserve this urgent subject as a live campaign issue than pass a bipartisan answer.

The majority has done everything we can to proceed to this issue in good faith. I have fast-tracked this issue to the floor this month, as our Democratic colleagues said they wanted until 48 hours ago. I have expressed my support for a robust amendment process, as our Democratic colleagues said they wanted until 48 hours ago.

So make no mistake about it: Senate Republicans are ready to make a law. We are ready to discuss and amend our way to a bipartisan product, pass it, and take it to conference with the House. The American people deserve an outcome, and we cannot get an outcome if Democrats will not even let us begin—not even let us begin.

I hope our colleagues reconsider and let the Senate consider police reform later today. If they do not, the next time another appalling incident makes our Nation sick to its stomach with grief and anger yet again, Senate

Democrats can explain to the Nation why they made sure the Senate did nothing.

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 Cory T. Wilson, of Mississippi, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Fifth Circuit.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 11:30 a.m. will be equally divided between the two leaders or their designees.

Mr. MCCONNELL. 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 Democratic leader is recognized.

JUSTICE IN POLICING ACT

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, the names of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery continue to ring in the Nation's ears, a searing reminder of the desperate need to reform policing and truly address injustice in America. Their memory is a national call to action.

Democrats answered that call by proposing a broad, strong, comprehensive policing reform bill that would bring deep and lasting change to police departments across America. House Democrats will pass that bill, the Justice in Policing Act, as early as tomorrow.

However, here in the Senate, the Republican majority proposed the legislative equivalent of a fig leaf, something that provides a little cover but no real change. In less than an hour, Leader MCCONNELL will ask the Senate to proceed to the so-called policing reform bill.

We have all gone over the bill's deficiencies over and over. There are no good answers. Some on the other side have said the bills are similar. They are like night and day.