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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, give our lawmakers the wisdom to remember and be grateful for all the things You have already done.

Lord, You have sustained our Nation during seasons of war and peace. You have helped us to find creative ways to strive for a more perfect union. You have provided us with solutions to difficult problems just when we needed You most.

Let this day be a time when Senators find time to thank You for Your bountiful blessings and faithfulness. As our lawmakers strive to live one day at a time, may they keep their focus on Your power and love.

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 30 seconds in morning business.

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

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, as the Congress considers the defense authorization bill—called the NDAA—this week, I hope that my amendments

to improve the Pentagon's financial management systems and crack down on wasteful spending will be supported.

Thirty years after Congress passed the Chief Financial Officers Act, the Department of Defense remains the only executive agency in our Federal Government that cannot get a clean audit opinion.

Every dollar of defense spending should be used to ensure our Nation's security and support for our men and women in uniform, which is why the Department of Defense needs to be held accountable for waste, fraud, and abuse. A clean audit has something to do with proof that they can do that.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

SENATE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, yesterday I discussed how the Senate's serious, fact-based approach to the coronavirus crisis has cut a sharp contrast with House Democrats' political theater.

Back in March, as the economic fallout from this crisis was just beginning, it fell to the Senate to write, negotiate, and pass the CARES Act. With the House absent from Washington, Senate Republicans turned a blank sheet of paper into an outline for the largest rescue package in American history. We negotiated with our Democratic colleagues, and we made a law.

House Democrats tried to insert unrelated wish-list items at the eleventh hour—things like tax credits for solar panels—but the Republican Senate stood strong, and because we did, for 3 months now, the unanimous bipartisan CARES Act has been the cornerstone of the Federal Government's response to this crisis.

Doctors, nurses, and hospitals have received historic Federal funding to supplement their efforts. Households received direct checks. Tens of millions of Americans have kept getting paychecks and not pink slips because of our small-business-saving Paycheck Protection Program. These are the historic programs that the Senate has spent weeks overseeing and adjusting where necessary.

A few weeks ago, House Democrats jetted into town for a day or two—just long enough to make another unserious contribution, to again use this crisis for partisan wish-listing. You don't have to take my word for it. The media completely panned it. NPR called it "a long wish list for Democrats." Another journalist wrote, "Neither this bill nor anything resembling it will ever become law." And listen to this reporting: "Privately, several House Democrats concede their latest bill feels like little more than an effort to appease the most liberal members of the caucus." This is the proposal that our Senate Democratic colleagues keep thundering that we should take up and pass here—something so unserious that it had House Democrats themselves rolling their eyes.

Remember, among other things, this bill would give taxpayer-funded checks to illegal immigrants, and it would change tax law to provide massively expensive gifts to wealthy people in high-tax blue States. These are their coronavirus priorities? This political theater is the opposite of the serious Senate approach that built the CARES Act.

Any further recovery effort should focus intently on three things: kids, jobs, and healthcare—kids, jobs, and healthcare.

To step back toward normalcy, our country will need K-12 and college students to resume their schooling, we will need to reenergize hiring to get workers their jobs back, and we will need continued progress on the

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



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healthcare fight to get ready for the fall and winter and speed the search for a vaccine.

One helpful policy would be strong legal protection for schools, colleges, nonprofits, and employers who are putting their necks on the line to reopen. So long as institutions follow the best available guidelines, they should not have to live in fear of a second epidemic of frivolous lawsuits. Believe me, the virus is worry enough.

These are the kinds of smart solutions Washington must continue discussing as we evaluate what further steps may be necessary. Partisan theater and politicized wish-lists are not what the country needs.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, now on another matter, as I have said for weeks, our domestic challenges cannot take Congress's eye off the ball of world affairs. So, as the Senate passed other major bills and the Senate Republicans tried to advance police reform until Democrats blocked us, our colleagues on the Armed Services Committee have worked hard to assemble the next National Defense Authorization Act.

Every year, the NDAA allows us to speak clearly about the Senate's priorities on matters of national defense. As China continues to treat maritime arteries like its own backyard sandbox, the men and women of the U.S. Seventh Fleet and the entire Indo-Pacific Command remain on call to maintain order. As Russia doubles down on its support of brutal dictators and attacks democratic regimes from dark corners of the web, U.S. Cyber Command remains vigilant and our NATO relationships remain vital. As tyrants, from Tehran to Pyongyang, pave over their citizens in pursuit of power, we need our sharpest minds and best tools watching their every move.

Our Armed Forces stand watch over our homeland, and they stand watch over an entire international order that shares our peaceful values and benefits our Nation.

Now our military has also risen to the unique task of helping respond to the pandemic. Military medical facilities have added critical capacity during the first surge of COVID-19, from Navy hospital ships to soldiers from the 531st Hospital Center at Fort Campbell. National Guard personnel have established and manned temporary testing facilities across the country. DOD research facilities have joined the race to develop treatments.

As our servicemembers confront challenges new and familiar, our job is to advance an NDAA that supports them and their families. Chairman INHOFE and Senator REED led a productive, bipartisan process in committee. I hope we will see a bipartisan amendment process out here on the floor as well.

But already the bill will make major steps forward. It supports servicemembers not only while they are at their duty stations but also on the homefront.

This year's bill encourages expanded telemedicine capabilities in the military healthcare system, and it will help retain highly trained providers. It implements new quality standards for acquisitions of military family housing and increases impact aid to school districts that support large numbers of military children. It revises sexual assault-prevention policies to destroy barriers to victims seeking justice.

It includes further steps to ensure all these efforts are supported by a more efficient and transparent administrative structure over at the Pentagon. That means changes to compensation to attract top talent, expanded access to cutting-edge software, and new checks on the Department's planning process to increase accountability.

The U.S. military is the greatest fighting force the world has ever seen. Our work in the coming days is meant to ensure that this remains the case. Supporting servicemembers and their families is a critical piece of this year's NDAA. Our men and women in uniform are simply the best, and they deserve the best.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—H.R. 7259

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I understand there is a bill at the desk due for 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:

An act (H.R. 7259) to allow acceleration certificates awarded under the Patents for Humanity Program to be transferable.

Mr. MCCONNELL. In order to place the bill on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I would 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.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2021—Resumed

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will re-

sume consideration of S. 4049, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 4049) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2021 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Inhofe amendment No. 2301, in the nature of a substitute.

McConnell (for Portman) amendment No. 2080 (to amendment No. 2301), to require an element in annual reports on cyber science and technology activities on work with academic consortia on high priority cybersecurity research activities in Department of Defense capabilities.

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.

RUSSIA

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, today there are thousands—thousands—of American servicemembers in Afghanistan defending us from terrorist organizations and their sponsors. They are joined by servicemembers and support personnel from allied nations and security partners. Each one of these lives is precious to a nation and to a family somewhere. Each one of us in this Chamber recognizes the solemn duty we have to our servicemembers.

We are all concerned about media reports that the Russian Government or its proxies has been offering bounties on the lives of American soldiers to Taliban-linked fighters in Afghanistan. The Associated Press has reported that the United States is investigating whether Americans died as a result of Russian bounties and is particularly focused on a 2019 attack that killed three U.S. marines, including one young man from Locust Valley, Long Island, NY, and another who worked as a firefighter in the FDNY—the great FDNY—for 15 years. On behalf of my constituents and the American people, I demand answers.

If, in fact, Putin and his cronies have been sponsoring the murder of American and coalition forces in Afghanistan, there is no question there should be swift and severe consequences. But unlike every previous administration I have ever worked with, the Trump administration has been shockingly weak-kneed when it comes to authoritarian leaders like Putin. This administration appears unwilling to even acknowledge the gravity of the situation, unwilling to even express concern about these rumors and commit to investigating them.