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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.

O God of light, as we approach Independence Day, we thank You for giving us the gift of true freedom.

You have blessed us with freedom from sin, guilt, and shame. You have redeemed us. You have also given us freedom from fear, providing us with peace in the midst of the storms.

Today, please guide our lawmakers so that they will fulfill Your purposes as they face the challenges of these times. Lord, awaken them to Your inescapable presence. Keep them from thinking that You are absent from our world or disinterested in it. Enable them to feel You in their midst as they grapple with the problems of our time.

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 (Mr. BOOZMAN). The Senator from Iowa.

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

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

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, the Department of Defense is the only agency that can't get a clean audit. Sometime around 1990, there was an audit law passed directing Depart-

ments to get to a point where they could get a clean audit. DOD is still the only one that hasn't.

Sometime around 2010, I believe, we laid down a requirement that the clean audit date ought to be met by 2017. Well, that wasn't met. So, for decades, DOD has been saying that they are almost there. Now they say it will be at least another 5 years before a clean opinion can be reached.

One reason they haven't been able to do that is the outdated mess of hundreds of financial management systems. Yet the Department of Defense still wants to spend almost \$200 million on an annual audit.

I urge my colleagues to support my amendment to pause the audit effort that is doomed to fail anyway and, instead, invest that \$200 million in updating the Department of Defense financial management system because, until they get the financial management systems right, DOD will never be capable of having a clean audit.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

ISSUES FACING AMERICA

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, before I discuss the legislation before the Senate, I need to spend a moment on something broader. Our country needs to confront the Democratic Party's willingness to threaten our governing institutions themselves.

Earlier this year, as the Senate disposed of the least fair, least thorough, and most rushed impeachment in modern history, I offered a broader warning. I said: "Leaders in the opposite party increasingly argue that if our institutions don't produce the outcomes they like, our institutions themselves must be broken."

No longer do disappointments for Democrats mean that Democrats need better arguments. Now disappointments for Democrats are claimed as proof—proof—that our country is fundamentally broken or that James Madison messed something up.

So while we have far-left mobs attacking statues of our Founding Fathers from coast to coast, we have far-left politicians attacking the institutions those Founders left us.

Now, step back and look at the landscape of fundamental changes that leading Democrats or their close allies are demanding: amending the First Amendment to restrict its protections, ending the electoral college, packing the Supreme Court with new Justices, packing the Senate with new States, and, to accomplish all this, destroying the Senate's distinguishing feature that makes radical change hard by design.

We have an entire political movement that is telling us—literally out loud—that they have lost patience with playing by the rules and may well declare war on the rule book itself. A coalition of leftwing special interests are explicitly campaigning for "51 for 51." They want Senators to vandalize the rules to pass legislation with a simple majority and then use that ill-gotten power to cement a presumed advantage by awarding the District of Columbia two Senate seats.

They want to nuke the Senate to pack the Senate. This is naked politics. No neutral principle could explain why all these special interests prioritize this cause which most Americans oppose. No neutral principle explains why Democrats want the 20th most populous city to get two Senators all to itself when retrocession to Maryland would satisfy their own slogans more cleanly.

No neutral principle explains why House Democrats wasted floor time on a potentially unconstitutional show vote.

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



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Just days after Democrats used the filibuster power to block Senator SCOTT's police reform bill, even colleagues who recently defended this important tradition have now bowed to the pressure to flirt with ending it.

On a similar note, you may remember that a kind of naked intimidation without modern precedent in modern memory took place a few months ago. The Democratic leader stood by the steps of the Supreme Court and directly threatened Justices if they ruled the wrong way in the June Medical Services case.

This display aligned with a whole new tradition of Senate Democrats threatening judges. A year ago, several wrote Justices saying the "Court is not well [and] perhaps the Court can heal itself before the public demands it be 'restructured.'"

In other words, nice judicial independence you have got there. It would be a shame if something happened to it.

Right on cue, a number of leftwing groups are agitating to revive the discredited notion of court-packing.

Now, following the Democratic leader's display, the Court ruled the way he wanted on that very case. They handed it down on Monday of this week. Our colleague took to the floor cracking jokes, giddy—giddy—he had gotten his way, but just moments later the Democratic leader picked right up where he left off, impugning and pressuring one Justice whose vote he disliked.

So you see, the improper pressure and the accusations of illegitimacy will never end. No amount of rulings the Democrats like would be enough because the fundamental respect for an independent judiciary is simply not there.

This is about outcomes, not institutions, and there is no limit to how far left the goalposts will move.

Well, the subject is not going away, but for today I will leave it there. This weekend, July 4, Americans will celebrate our founding. We will celebrate the Framers and the traditions and the institutions that they left us.

We cannot let radicals tear down their likenesses or their legacies. We must preserve the gifts and the institutions we celebrate so our grandchildren and their grandchildren can celebrate them as well.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, on an entirely different matter, the Senate continues to consider the National Defense Authorization Act. I understand we are close to a bipartisan structure for amendments, and if our Democratic colleagues will let us, I hope we can move forward today.

All week I have discussed how the 60th consecutive NDAA will help our Nation protect its people, stand with our allies, and keep pace with our competitors. This legislation has global

reach, but, as all my colleagues know, the NDAA is also a profoundly local bill for communities in all 50 States.

My home State is proud to support three Army installations and the men and women of the Kentucky Air and Army National Guard. Last fall, I hosted Defense Secretary Mark Esper in Kentucky to speak with the Fort Knox community. He called for a renewed commitment to supporting our all-volunteer force, including military spouses and their families.

The NDAA advances that goal. It will authorize a new elementary school at Fort Knox. This construction, paired with progress toward a new middle school at Fort Campbell, will continue making Kentucky's installations a welcoming home for military families.

This project comes on the heels of Fort Knox's selection for the new V Corps headquarters. This mission brings more than 600 additional soldiers to Kentucky in support of U.S. operations over in Europe. They will join Fort Knox's already impressive list of significant commands, including the Army's Recruiting, Cadet, and Human Resources Command. The V Corps will find a premier installation made even better by this NDAA.

Our bill also authorizes the construction of a new headquarters for the Kentucky National Guard. The facility will consolidate the Guard's operation to a central location.

Just recently, our citizen soldiers and airmen have stepped up to combat COVID-19. I am glad this legislation will deliver for them.

At the Blue Grass Army Depot, the NDAA will advance the disposal of legacy chemical weapons. Families in Madison County have lived for generations with these deadly agents practically in their backyards. For years, I have fought alongside them to support safe and responsible demilitarization.

In just the first year of chemical destruction activities, the depot has already completed a campaign ahead of schedule. An entire type of munition has been completely deleted from the U.S. stockpile. Our legislation will help us safely consign more of these weapons to the ash heap of history.

Now, I have also spoken this week about the growing boldness of our Nation's adversaries and the evolving threats our servicemembers face. The men and women of Fort Campbell, including the 101st Airborne, are among those our Nation turns to first to handle serious challenges. Their recent deployments to Europe, Afghanistan, and to support the COVID-19 response in New York and New Jersey show their importance to our country.

Pursuant to the national defense strategy, this NDAA will encourage new capabilities so elite fighting forces like the 101st are equipped for success under any circumstances.

The Senate is grateful for the courageous service of our Armed Forces. The bipartisan legislation before us honors their sacrifices and authorizes the re-

sources to carry out their missions. Its impact will not be felt just by our adversaries overseas but by our servicemembers and communities right here at home.

I would like to once again thank Chairman INHOFE, Ranking Member REED, and our colleagues on the Armed Services Committee for their serious and thoughtful work.

Let's get this bill moving toward completion.

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 Russell Vought, of Virginia, to be Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

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. Mr. 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.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, two numbers sum up the state of America today: 52,788, the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases yesterday; and 1.4 million, the number of unemployment claims filed this week. In the next few months, these numbers will be far more important than the job numbers released this morning in determining the long-term health of our economy and the health of this country. The statistics I mentioned would have been harrowing during February, March, April, or May, during the initial surge and rapid spread of the disease. They would have been distressing even then, but here in the beginning of July, 6 months into the crisis, long after other countries have experienced a rapid decline of COVID-19, it is shocking that the United States is hitting ever grimmer milestones.

There is no doubt that much of the responsibility for this debacle—the