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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, we praise You that You continue to rescue us from ourselves. We will tell about the wonders You have worked on our behalf. We are born in sin and formed by iniquity, but Your power continues to transform.

Lord, You have kept us from stumbling and disgrace. Continue to provide our Senators with the blessings of Your mercy and peace. Lead them not into temptation, but deliver them from evil.

Use our lawmakers to restore health and unity to a nation desperately desiring Your purposes to prevail. May Your favor keep us all secure.

We pray in Your loving 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. BARASSO). 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.

RECOGNIZING THE IOWA AIR NATIONAL GUARD'S 185TH AIR REFUELING WING

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, on November 27, it was announced that the Iowa Air National Guard's 185th Air Refueling Wing in Sioux City, IA, has been awarded the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award.

This award was earned for the wing's exceptional service to the Air Force in 2019, which included the usual thousands of flying hours and refueling, but it also included things like the humanitarian efforts of this wing's effort in the multiple Puerto Rican natural disasters.

In addition, the 185th Wing has been working tirelessly to support cleanup efforts from this great windstorm in Iowa called the derecho, which wiped out 800,000 acres of crops through the middle of Iowa. It also included such things that they may not be recognized for enough—helping with the COVID-19 testings in the State of Iowa.

So I say congratulations to the 185th Wing, and, most importantly, thank you for your dedication to serving our State and country.

I yield the floor.

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. MCCONNELL. 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 MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, the American people are hurting. We are in the thick of one of the worst national crises in modern memory, and people's eyes are fixed on Congress. They need the House and the Senate to stop chasing our tails and make a law.

There are small business employees who have held onto their jobs all this time because of the Paycheck Protection Program but are facing the prospect they might be laid off now, with vaccines just around the corner, because Washington fumbles the ball in the red zone.

There are medically vulnerable Americans who have watched Operation Warp Speed appear to succeed at a historic pace, but Congress can't even agree to fully fund the distribution efforts that will get the vaccines to people.

There are Americans who have been thrown out of work, through no fault of their own, who are watching Federal aid programs tick toward expiration in a few weeks, even though neither side in Congress opposes extending them.

Senate Republicans have made one offer after another after another to try and make law on all the significant areas where nobody even disagrees. We spent July, August, September, October, and November trying different ways to create common ground, but the Speaker of the House and the Senate Democratic leader have been just as consistent. At every turn, they have delayed, deflected, moved the goalposts, and made the huge number of places where Congress agrees into a hostage—into a hostage—of the few places where we do not agree.

Back in the summertime, I pointed out the obvious. I said leading Democrats simply just didn't want any more help to reach American families before the election occurred. The other side claimed great offense; how insulting to even suggest that such cynicism might be at play.

And now they are admitting it out loud. Yesterday, on CNN, the Democratic whip was asked point-blank why the Speaker and the Democratic leader were so unwilling to play ball back in the autumn. The No. 2 Democrat responded: "[Well], there was some exuberance involved because an election was coming." Well, he gets points for candor: "because an election was coming."

A few days ago, Speaker PELOSI told reporters why she reversed months of

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



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statements and suddenly began discussing comparatively more reasonable sums of money. Her answer was simple. She thinks the Presidential election went the way she wanted. The Speaker of the House views it as a success that she denied struggling people relief they badly needed for months because she thinks she got the political result she was after.

I count no fewer than 10 separate times that top Democrats rejected or blocked various Republican efforts to jump-start the process, so here is just a partial sampling.

In July, Republicans sketched a comprehensive plan for safe schools, jobs, and healthcare. We could have made law in July, but the Democratic leader wouldn't even engage with it. Just before August, Republicans tried to at least extend unemployment aid before it expired. Democrats blocked that as well.

In September, we tried something else: a targeted effort to spend hundreds of billions of dollars for PPP, vaccine development, and other priorities. Every Democrat who voted blocked us from even debating it, and they did it a second time a month later in October.

Last week, after speaking with the administration, I made yet another overture. The Democratic leader said: No thanks. And just yesterday, the Speaker and the Democratic leader brushed off two different overtures in the space of about 2 hours.

I suggested that both sides drop what seemed to be the most controversial demand in the eyes of our counterparts. Democrats continued to oppose commonsense legal protections that university presidents have been begging for, and Republicans see no need to send huge sums of money to State and local governments whose tax revenues have actually gone up—gone up.

Negotiating 101 suggests we set those two controversial pieces aside and plow ahead with a huge pile of things that we agree on, but that would require both sides to truly want to get an outcome.

Just hours after Democrats poured cold water on that, Secretary Mnuchin tried another new tack and sent over an offer, and in a bizarre and schizophrenic press release, the Speaker and the leader said the administration was obstructing negotiations by negotiating. Two more brush-offs in about 2 hours. More deflection, more delay, and more suffering for innocent Americans.

Can anyone point to a single sign—a single sign—from April through now, that Democratic leaders have seriously wanted another bipartisan deal to become law? Can anybody name one way—just one—the Democratic leaders would have behaved differently if their singular goal was to kill any compromise? That hypothetical world looks suspiciously like the world we have been living in.

Think of it. We have a Speaker of the House from San Francisco who has

spent months ensuring that unemployed Californians can't have jobless aid extended and California restaurants can't get another round of PPP unless the Governor of California gets a Federal slush fund out of proportion to any proven need.

Do working families agree they should not get any more help themselves unless the Governors and State legislators get a controversial bailout? Are struggling Americans saying: Thank goodness the Democrats are bravely—bravely—blocking help for me and my family unless my State politicians get some more cash? I would say not.

Our people need more help. There is a huge list of helpful policies that both sides agree on. This need not be rocket science. But we can't do a thing unless the Democrats decide they actually want to make a law.

CHINA

Mr. McCONNELL. Now, Mr. President, on another matter entirely. Last week, the struggle to preserve freedom and autonomy in Hong Kong was dealt another disturbing blow.

On Thursday, Jimmy Lai, a prominent media figure and pro-democracy activist, was denied bail. The Chinese Communist Party continues cracking down on dissent and free speech. Not long ago, the international community hoped China's modernization would create more respect for basic freedoms. Unfortunately, the CCP has just marshaled new tools for making its oppression even more stifling.

Internationally, we have seen the Chinese Communist Party find more success exporting its warped vision into the global public square than the free world has had getting Beijing to respect the rules of the road.

For the last 4 years, thanks to this administration's leadership and this Senate, we have begun exchanging the old naivete about China for a smarter and tougher approach. Through new national security and national defense strategies, the United States has committed to deterring a new wave of threats from near-peer competitors like China and Russia.

Reforms to our budgets and policies are underway. We have used NDAA's and appropriations to invest in a military that is prepared to meet and defeat these threats. Maintaining our edge will mean sustaining these reforms, along with strong diplomacy, to counter China's influence.

In coordination with the executive branch, our Intelligence Committee has highlighted the need for everyone to strengthen their defenses against the CCP's espionage, intellectual property theft, and political influence campaigns.

Senators CORNYN and FEINSTEIN, in particular, have led bipartisan efforts to reform CFIUS and protect against predatory foreign investments aimed at threatening or stealing high-tech

and critical infrastructure. Allied countries are following our lead, and public and private sector cooperation has improved to defend the institutions, alliances, and international order the CCP wants to disrupt.

The administration has worked with international partners to ensure the security of 5G, reassert freedom of navigation in the South China Sea, and blunt harmful elements of China's exploitive Belt and Road Initiative.

Of course, more needs to be done, particularly on human rights. The treatment of Hongkongers in the spotlight reminds the world of the ways we know Beijing is treating Uighurs and Tibetans in the shadows.

And if China treats its own citizens with brutal violence, just think how it plans to treat its neighbors. So I welcome the latest sanctions imposed by the administration and the latest authorities granted by Congress. We are raising the stakes for China's repression, but our work isn't over. Our partners will continue to look to us to lead with a tone of zero tolerance for this behavior. The United States must continue to work alongside China's peaceful neighbors and our democratic allies, like Japan and Australia. We must give voice to those in Hong Kong, Xinjiang, and Tibet who have been repressed and jailed. We must stand against the worst instincts and actions of the Communist Party.

REMEMBERING EMMANUEL "MANNY" CAULK

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, now on one final matter, last week, students and families in Kentucky were met with tragic news. On Friday, Manny Caulk, the superintendent of Fayette County Schools, passed away unexpectedly.

Manny was the first member of his family to graduate from college. In 2015, he assumed responsibility for the second largest school district in Kentucky. An education had changed his life, literally, and he wanted to share that gift with others. And by all accounts, he did just that.

Manny encouraged his students to aim high and helped them exceed expectations, starting with his first students in a county detention center, and, in 2018, his colleagues chose him as Kentucky's "Superintendent of the Year."

I was glad to have Manny's partnership as we worked to protect Kentucky families from COVID-19. At every step, he kept focused on the well-being of Lexington students.

Over the weekend, condolences poured in as we reflected on Manny's lasting contributions. I would like to add the Senate's gratitude for this top-tier educator. Our prayers are with Manny's wife Christol and their children at this very difficult time.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.