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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 Spirit, our hope for the years to come, today, teach our lawmakers to do things Your way, embracing Your precepts and walking in Your path. Inspire them to trust You for safety. As they receive guidance from You and follow Your leading, replace anxiety with calm, confusion with clarity, and pessimism with hope.

Lord, guide our Senators to find workable solutions for the problems of our Nation and world.

You are our God, and the good things we have come from You.

We pray in Your marvelous 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. ALEXANDER). The Senator from Iowa.

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

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

### IOWA

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, we all know that, without a doubt, 2020 has been a difficult year. But for me it was an important year to continue fighting for Iowans and listening to Iowans.

This year I completed my 40th year of my 99 county meetings that included

a Q&A in every one of those counties. This annual tradition keeps me in touch with the grassroots of Iowa and allows me to bring their ideas to the policymaking tables here in Washington, DC.

With all the twists and turns this year took, my county meetings were more beneficial than ever. I just want to mention a couple of these twists and turns.

The twist and turns involved the big devastating windstorm we called the “derecho” that went through central Iowa, destroying 800,000 acres of crops. Those twists and turns involved dealing with all the issues coming from COVID-19.

One thing I know for sure, Iowans are very resilient people. So I look forward to continuing these county meetings and the Q&A’s involved with them at the beginning of the new year.

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 Democratic leader and I worked into the evening alongside the Speaker of the House and the House Republican leader. We made major headway toward hammering out a targeted pandemic relief package that would be able to pass both Chambers with bipartisan majorities. We committed to con-

tinuing these urgent discussions until we have an agreement, and we agreed we will not leave town until we have made law.

The American people need more help. It is that simple. Further targeted relief is now months overdue. We need vaccine distribution money. We need to re-up the Paycheck Protection Program to save jobs. We need to continue to provide for laid-off Americans. Congressional leaders on both sides are going to keep working until we get this done.

### TRIBUTE TO PAT ROBERTS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, now on a completely different matter, it is both my honor and unhappy duty to offer one more parting tribute to a distinguished Senator who will leave us at the end of the 116th Congress.

My good friend the senior Senator from Kansas, PAT ROBERTS, is preparing to close out the longest congressional tenure the Sunflower State has ever seen.

When PAT arrived in Washington as a freshman House Member, he was a young man among giants—Byrd, Stevens, Dole. But over the past four decades, the name “Roberts” has come to define its own iconic brand of heartland statesmanship.

PAT is the first to admit he didn’t establish that name all on his own. He inherited it from another great Kansan. Charles Wesley Roberts was a marine, a journalist, and a leader in Republican politics.

So get ready to experience some *deja vu*, because at age 16, our future colleague got to attend the 1952 convention that nominated Kansas’s own General Eisenhower. That early taste of politics planted a seed.

PAT earned his own Marine Corps commission. In fact, he served with the first contingent to return to Iwo Jima, where his father had fought 15 years earlier.

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



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Then he decided to ply another family trade. Like generations of Roberts men, including an abolitionist newspaperman three generations back, he took up journalism.

Only then did PAT bring his talents here to Washington, to Senator Frank Carlson's office. He impressed, and by the next time his next boss, Keith Sebelius, announced his retirement, PAT was running out of excuses not to go on and run himself.

Campaigning in Kansas's "Big First" district required countless road trips across nearly half the State. But listening to neighbors, building relationships, and earning trust came naturally. PAT's district elected him no fewer than eight times, and the whole State sent him here to the Senate another four.

Before long, every small-time diner in Western Kansas was filled with people who saw PAT not just as an elected official but as a trusted friend. The way I hear it, you walk into a restaurant or a coffee shop with PAT, and you budget about 15 minutes of conversation before you even make it to your table. Many of those conversations revolve around one particular line of work. There is a reason why no less an authority than Bob Dole would later dub this man "Mr. Agriculture."

When Republicans retook the House majority in 1994, they knew who had to chair the Ag Committee. The rest is history for our colleague, for his State, and for farmers and growers all across America.

The 1996 farm bill that PAT shepherded included "Freedom to Farm," landmark legislation that set a new tone for the way American farmers would compete in a global market.

Now, today, we know that PAT would later become the only American ever to chair the Ag Committee in both the Senate and the House. But on this side of the dome, he tackled a few other assignments first.

PAT had already helped clean up some ethics messes in the House, and so his discretion and integrity landed him on the Senate Ethics Committee. In short order, he was chairing it.

Then came the Intelligence Committee gavel and, with it, more sensitive challenges. Our trusted marine had to conduct oversight and ask hard questions in the wake of September 11 and the Iraq invasion. He oversaw essential reports and helped shape reform.

But we couldn't keep the Kansan away from his top passion for long. So it wasn't long before Mr. Agriculture was chairing the committee with the most importance of all to his constituents back in Kansas.

Chairman ROBERTS has been a constant voice and a consistent champion for the men and women of this country who get their hands dirty, grow crops, raise livestock, and, as our colleague likes to say, "feed a troubled and hungry world."

Even in polarized times, the Ag Committee has largely remained a haven

for bipartisan work. That is partly the nature of an issue set where divisions tend to be more regional than ideological, but it is also because of the skilled, thoughtful, and genial consensus-builder we have had at the center of the dais.

Two years ago, because of the chairman, the farm bill conference report passed by an overwhelming margin of 87 to 13—87 votes for our farm bill. By my count, that was the eighth farm bill our colleague had a hand in. It turns out that experience actually matters, or, as our colleague likes to say, "it takes a long time to do big things"—"a long time to do big things."

That is true of multiyear farm bills. It is true of the advances PAT has pushed forward on geopolitical issues like food security. It is true of other important projects that our friend has taken under his wing, like the crusade to make certain that President Eisenhower receives the monument he deserved here in Washington. This pandemic may have changed the unveiling ceremonies this year, but it is only fitting that Ike persevered. That is thanks to a quarter century of work from PAT ROBERTS.

There is a reason the people of Kansas have rehired our colleague time after time, and it is not just for his entertaining wit, although I will have more on that subject in just a moment. It is because, when their Senator sees a way to strengthen his home State or his country, he keeps at it until he gets it done.

In short, PAT has spent decades making sure that it is not just places like Manhattan, NY, but also Manhattan, KS, that get the attention and support they deserve.

In fact, thanks to PAT, Manhattan, KS, is the home for our Nation's historic new National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility. He played the long game and spent years getting his State ready to make the pitch. This state-of-the-art research facility will come online at K-State, next to another important research facility that happens to be named Pat Roberts Hall.

He has looked out for Fort Riley and its essential missions. He has helped devastated communities like Greensburg rebuild after disaster. In every way imaginable, Kansas has had its champion.

PAT's voice has been a powerful presence in these halls. But in rare moments when he hasn't been getting results, the voice has, of course, been making us laugh. PAT is one of the best humored Senators in a long time—not funny, humorous.

It is not just PAT's quick wit or his punch lines themselves that take the cake. The best part is just the unpretentious fearlessness with which he will go after a good laugh in almost any situation.

It is a daunting task to try to convey PAT's winsome humor as a third party. It is a package deal. The words, the

voice, the expression all work together. But I will share just one example.

Several years back, PAT and I were both attending a formal dinner honoring Bob Dole and Howard Baker. PAT had been asked to offer some remarks in Bob's honor. Apparently, he decided a conventional toast would just simply not cut it; the fancy evening would need shaking up.

It so happened that PAT had recently attended Kennedy Center Honors that honored Neil Diamond. So when PAT took the podium at that dinner, with that famous tune "Sweet Caroline" stuck in his head, he wound up leading the audience in the world premiere sing-along of the new original song "Sweet Robert Dole . . . Bob, Bob, Bob." A little unusual, sure, but somehow it was the perfect contribution. It literally brought the house down.

So we have here a senior Senator from a State that expects greatness from its representatives. They gave America a young man from Abilene who led the fight against tyranny in Europe and became President. They gave us another son from Russell who fought in that fight, came home, became Senate majority leader, and ran for President.

But let's add one more name to that distinguished company. Historians certainly will. There is a third Kansas statesman from Holton who belongs on that list: Eisenhower, Dole, and ROBERTS.

In his own farewell speech, PAT quoted his first boss in Washington, Senator Carlson. He said:

There are no self-made men or women in public office. It is your friends and family who make you what you are.

Well, more than all the bills he has passed, above all the outcomes he willed into reality, PAT says his family is his "crowning achievement." So I must conclude by thanking PAT's "magnolia blossom," Franki, for her generosity in lending PAT to us all these years and everything she has done to make it possible. And the Senate thanks his three kids and their eight grandchildren for making do with less of our colleague's time than they deserve.

So PAT, we know we are going to laugh less without you. I am afraid we are not going to get as much done without you.

But you have made us better for knowing you, the Senate better for having you, and Kansas and your country so much better for your devoted service.

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 PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

BUSINESS BEFORE THE SENATE

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, as we rapidly approach the end of the session, Senators are working in earnest to finish a bipartisan government funding bill as well as an emergency Federal relief package.

Over the past several weeks, the bipartisan Gang of 8 came together to provide a framework for an agreement on emergency COVID relief. That framework has been the basis of discussions between the four congressional leaders: Speaker PELOSI, Leader MCCARTHY, Leader MCCONNELL, and myself. Secretary Mnuchin has been in our talks as well, representing the President.

Yesterday we had two very long and very productive meetings. Our final discussion stretched late into the evening.

As we race the clock to reach a final accord before the end of the year, we are close to an agreement. It is not a done deal yet, but we are very close.

Now, for Democrats, this has always been about getting the American people the relief they need in the time of an acute national crisis, of an emergency to so many Americans. This has been about delivering a lifeline to Americans who were laid off, through no fault of their own, families struggling to pay the rent and put food on the table, small businesses hanging on for dear life.

This has been about saving our schools, our healthcare system, and delivering the resources to produce and distribute the vaccine that should finally, finally help our country turn the corner and defeat this evil disease.

We are on the precipice of achieving these goals. We Democrats would have liked to go considerably further, but this won't be the last time Congress speaks on COVID relief. Right now, we must address this emergency over the short term. But make no mistake, we will work in the future to provide additional relief as the country requires, but we need to provide a platform to build on. We need to address this emergency right now.

At the end of one of the most difficult years in recent American history, a vaccine has given us all a reason for hope. Let's give the country another reason. The finish line is in sight. Everyone wants to get this done. Let's push through the few final meters and deliver the outcome that the American people very much need.

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. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

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 Katherine A. Crytzer, of Tennessee, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Tennessee.

TECHNOLOGY

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, yesterday afternoon, the Commerce Subcommittee on Communications, Technology, Innovation, and the Internet held our final hearing of the 116th Congress. The title of yesterday's hearing was "Betting on the Rest: Expanding American Entrepreneurship Outside Traditional Hubs," and it focused on examining where venture capital is being invested in this country and where it is not, with an eye to exploring ways to expand investment to other parts of the country.

Over the past 50 years, venture capital has come to play an essential role in advancing American entrepreneurship. Venture capitalists have provided key funding for startups that have gone on to become some of America's most profitable companies. Many of the technologies and services we rely on today would not be around if venture capitalists hadn't been willing to take a risk on innovation.

However, venture capital investment in the United States has traditionally been highly concentrated in certain areas of the country. In 2019, California-based companies received 50 percent of all venture-backed investment in the United States. Just three States—California, New York, and Massachusetts—accounted for almost 75 percent of all venture-backed investment in the country.

There are a lot of valid reasons for this investment concentration. However, this geographic imbalance also means that a majority of regions within the United States are often shut out from the kind of investment that creates jobs, revitalizes communities, and enables the pursuit of the American dream.

Without greater access to capital in underserved regions, the flow of talent,

wealth, and opportunity will continue to move to only a handful of coastal cities, and the full reach and diversity of American ingenuity will go unrealized. Fortunately, there are a lot of individuals in the private sector who are already working to address this issue and expand venture-backed investment to other areas of the United States, and we had the opportunity to hear from some of them yesterday. I was very grateful for their input. We were very pleased to have a South Dakota entrepreneur among our panelists.

I am committed to making sure that the Federal Government serves as a help, not a hindrance, to the expansion of venture capital investment. I took the reins of the Commerce Committee's Subcommittee on Communications, Technology, Innovation, and the Internet at the start of the 116th Congress, and I am very proud of the work we have done over the past 2 years. We have had a very active Congress, holding eight hearings in Washington, DC, as well as a hearing in my home State of South Dakota. These hearings have explored everything from broadband investment in rural America to the way the social media companies filter information on their platforms.

I have introduced several bills over the past 2 years that have been informed by our work at the committee, including the PACT Act, the TRACED Act, the Telecommunications Skilled Workforce Act, and the STREAMLINE Small Cell Deployment Act.

A priority of mine over the past several years has been ensuring that America stays at the head of the next wave of internet technology, which is 5G. In addition to the tremendous technological benefits that will result from 5G, staying at the forefront of the 5G revolution will bring tremendous economic investment and create a lot of great American jobs.

I spent a lot of time working on this issue when I was chairman of the Commerce Committee, and heading up the Communications, Technology, Innovation, and the Internet Subcommittee in this Congress has allowed me to continue to focus on 5G.

Last year, I introduced the STREAMLINE Small Cell Deployment Act along with the ranking member of the subcommittee, Senator SCHATZ. Our legislation would help expedite the deployment of the small cells that are a key part of 5G infrastructure.

This year, I introduced the Telecommunications Skilled Workforce Act to address another part of the 5G equation, and that is ensuring that we have the workforce in place to handle the demands of installing and maintaining 5G technology.

As a resident of a rural State, ensuring access to broadband internet in rural communities has long been a priority of mine. I introduced legislation this year to direct funds from radio spectrum auctions to expand rural broadband access. I am continuing my work to ensure that rural communities get access to 5G technology.