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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.

Divine Master, You are our stronghold and the pioneer of our future. Teach us to work with greater faithfulness. May pleasing You become our primary focus as You place a song in our hearts for each burden on our shoulders.

Guide our lawmakers today. Lead them to Your fortress of love, patience, and kindness. Lord, remind them that any success alien to Your way is worse than failure and that any failure in Your Spirit is better than gold.

And, Lord, please be with our faithful pages as they prepare for tomorrow's graduation. In all of their tomorrows, do for them more than they can ask or imagine.

We pray in Your wonderful 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. MULLIN). The Senator from Iowa.

### CHINA

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, today marks 5 years since the Robinson family of Iowa City, IA, has been matched with their adoptive child way over in China. Sadly, this is not a celebratory anniversary of that date, as the Robinson family, along with 300 other American families, have yet to be unified with their adoptive children, many with unique medical needs.

You see, in August of 2024, China very abruptly ended its intercountry adoption program without even clarifying what that would mean for the families already matched with their child.

The Chinese Embassy cited that cross-border adoption has fulfilled its mission for the country, as now many more Chinese families have stronger will and capacity to adopt the orphans in China. While that is good news for those orphans, the country has made a commitment to American families that is not being kept. China still hasn't given a straight answer on whether these matched cases will be completed.

I have been told that families from other countries have been invited to travel to complete their adoptions but not Americans. Why not Americans?

It has been 5 years since families like the Robinsons have prepared their homes to welcome these adoptive children, 5 years of a developed familiar relationship.

I hope that President Trump and the incoming administration see that these matched adoption cases be completed. President Trump talks about wanting to meet with Xi, have more friendly relationships with President Xi. Hopefully this is an environment that can bring the Robinsons and their child together.

China made a commitment, and I think and everybody thinks China ought to honor its commitment. China ought to do that for no reason other than they want the respect of the world. They seem to be working to get that respect, and when people question that respect, they get very uptight about it.

### 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CONGRESSIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, on another issue, I want to talk about the 30-year anniversary of a piece of legislation that I have been involved with.

A lot has happened during the first week of the second Trump administration. Within just 3 days in the White House, President Trump has put the pedal to the metal, delivering on the mandate voters expected when they went to the polls on November 5.

Now, thinking of history, it brings to mind a message the voters delivered 30 years ago. Some of my colleagues will remember what is called the Contract with America. That was a platform, if you remember, engineered by former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich that led to what was called the Republican Revolution of 1994. In fact, it was so much of a revolution that I remember that in President Clinton's State of the Union Message, he said and opened his statement with these few words:

The era of big government is over.

That is how much the Gingrich contract rattled Washington, DC.

So the American people expressed that they were fed up with government-knows-best and a Washington mindset that applied rules for thee but not for me. Sounds familiar, doesn't it, 30 years later with the Trump mandate?

So I come to the Senate floor today to talk about one particular issue that still comes up at my county meetings. For years, Iowans have asked me something like this: Why doesn't Congress have to follow the same laws as we have to follow? That used to be true until we passed the Congressional Accountability Act. In fact, that law became law, law of the land, 30 years ago today.

Prior to 1995, Congress was exempt from about a dozen workplace laws that applied to the private sector but not to us in the Congress. I want to revisit how it came about.

In 1994, the American people delivered a landslide victory to Republicans. We gained majority control of the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate. It was an epic victory considering that Democrats had run 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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House of Representatives for all but 4 years going way back to 1931.

The best approach to good leadership is to keep an ear to the ground and a finger to the pulse of the American people, much like our 45th and 47th President has done since 2017. Throughout my public service, that is how this U.S. Senator has worked to represent Iowans. By listening, by keeping in touch, and by going home every chance I get, I hold myself accountable to the people. This year, I will start my 45th consecutive year holding meetings with Iowans, holding Q&A meetings in each of Iowa's 99 counties.

Now, for a basis for keeping in touch and keeping government responsible, let's look at Federalist 57. In that Federalist Paper, James Madison wrote about the vital need for what he called "communion of interests" between the people and their leaders, "without which every government degenerates into tyranny." In the 21st century, you could call that having skin in the game.

Back to this 30th anniversary of the Congressional Accountability Act, during the period of Congress having exemption from some workplace rules, Iowa's small businesses and Main Street civic leaders hit the nail on the head. They said to me and other Members of Congress: What is good for the goose ought to be good for the gander.

So some of us rolled up our sleeves and got to work. I teamed up with former Senator Joe Lieberman of Connecticut here in the Senate. Like many legislative efforts, it took years to build a bipartisan coalition to have these laws applied to the Congress of the United States. The 1994 electoral victory was the boost that we needed to get across the finish line.

On January 4, 1995, I reintroduced the Congressional Accountability Act. My good friend and former Senate majority leader Bob Dole summed up the reason for this legislation better than anybody else. I quote Senator Dole:

Many of our citizens have begun to view the Senate and House of Representatives not as a people's body, but as an "imperial Congress," as an institution that considers itself above the law and without accountability.

That double standard had to end. We had to restore confidence with the American people. That is why I championed the Congressional Accountability Act—to inject common sense into lawmaking.

This Federal law would provide that lawmakers walk in the shoes of our constituents, abiding by the same workplace rights and worker protection laws, including civil rights, age discrimination, disability, overtime pay, and occupational safety and health laws.

One of my opponents during those years of trying to get this legislation passed was Senator Stevens of Alaska. I remember as this bill passed the U.S. Senate and I was victorious, he came up to me and poked his finger in my chest and said: I hope you are the first

Senator to get sued because of this legislation.

Well, I haven't been sued, and I don't think anybody has been sued.

The first bill that we sent to the President's desk in the 104th Congress was the Congressional Accountability Act. President Clinton signed it, as I mentioned earlier, 30 years ago today, on January 23, 1995.

Since then, I have led reforms to expand whistleblower protections to employees in the legislative and executive branches. In 2018, President Trump signed into law reforms to the law's reporting and resolution process for workplace harassment claims.

Although the ink has long dried on the Congressional Accountability Act, we all still need to be fighting every day to keep a reality check here in Washington, DC.

I am going to finish with this ironic statement. Even though this legislation was passed 30 years ago and even though I have heard about its need for a long time before that, I still—as I say, ironically—hear at my town meetings some constituents say to me: Why don't you have to live under the same laws that we live under? Then I have an opportunity to tell them about the Congressional Accountability Act.

I yield the floor.

#### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

#### FILIBUSTER

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I think we all remember the situation just a few short months ago in the lead-up to the election. Democrat Senators and Senate candidates were declaring their commitment to eliminating the filibuster or creating carve-outs that would render it meaningless. The Democratic leader himself made it very clear that the days of the filibuster were numbered, telling a crowd at the Democratic National Convention that his party would be changing the rules to pass the Democrats' Federal takeover of elections. The filibuster, it seemed, was on its way out.

Fast-forward to yesterday. Yesterday, it seems there was a sudden change of heart because yesterday every Senate Democrat—the Demo-

cratic leader, new Democratic Senators, long-serving Democratic Senators who had expressed their desire to get rid of the filibuster—joined together and filibustered a bill. That is right. Every Democratic Senator participated in a filibuster of yesterday's legislation.

I will leave aside the disturbing fact that Democrats chose to unite to block a bill to protect living, breathing, newborn children born alive after an attempted abortion.

What I want to talk about today is Democrats' apparent belief that there should be one rule for Democrats and another rule for everyone else. Back in 2017, during President Trump's first term, when Republicans controlled the Senate, 32 Senate Democrats—many of whom, I might add, are still serving today—joined a letter to Senate leadership asking for preservation of the legislative filibuster. Then Democrats took power, and all of a sudden Democrats started to find the legislative filibuster a major inconvenience. They wanted to pass highly partisan legislation like their Federal takeover of elections, and they discovered the filibuster was getting in the way.

Now, Republicans are in power again, and it seems Democrats are back to supporting the filibuster. And the only thing I can gather from that is that Democrats think they should be free to pass any legislation they choose when they are in power but the Republicans should not; that the rules should apply when they serve the aims of the Democratic Party and that the rules should be abolished whenever they interfere with Democrats' far-left agenda; in short, that one party, the Democratic Party, should be making decisions in this country.

That is not a very democratic attitude. It also betrays an elitism, a disdain for half of the electorate that perhaps had something to do with Democrats' electoral defeat in November.

Now, there is no doubt that the filibuster can sometimes be frustrating. I am frustrated that we couldn't pass legislation yesterday to uphold basic human decency by requiring that babies born alive after an attempted abortion receive appropriate medical care. But the filibuster serves a crucial purpose.

The Founders intended the Senate to be a counterbalance to the House. It was designed to be a more stable, thoughtful, more deliberative legislative body to check ill-considered or intemperate legislation or tyranny by the majority. And as time has gone on, the legislative filibuster is the Senate rule that has had perhaps the greatest impact in preserving the Founders' vision of the Senate.

The filibuster acts as a check on imprudent or ill-considered legislation. It forces discussion and compromise, and, critically, it ensures that Americans whose party is not in power also have a