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Senate

The Senate met at 3 p.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.

Our Father in Heaven, we pause at the convening of this Senate session after hearing news of hatred, violence, and grief in our Nation and world. As we see and hear about tragedies that shock us, we acknowledge also our total dependence upon You.

Lord, we are aware of the fragile and temporary nature of our earthly pilgrimage and look to You, a changeless one, to guide our steps. Please guide our lawmakers through the turbulence of these times with more than human wisdom. Lord, elevate their best human efforts with Your might so that justice, truth, and peace may prevail.

We pray in Your matchless 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.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BUDD). 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.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

HONORING SERGEANT WILLIAM N. HOWARD AND SERGEANT EDGAR B. TORRES-TOVAR

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, it is with a heavy heart that I come to the floor of the Senate today. Over the weekend, on December 13, two members of the Iowa National Guard, alongside a civilian interpreter, were killed by ISIS terrorists in Syria. SGT William N. Howard and SGT Edgar B. Torres-Tovar, both part of the 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 34th Infantry Division, paid the ultimate sacrifice. We are forever indebted to them for their dedication and service to Iowa and to the United States.

I would like to take a moment to speak about each of these remarkable young men.

SGT Nate Howard of Marshalltown, IA, has served the Iowa National Guard for 11 years. His admiration for his grandfather's service enkindled his patriotic spirit and ultimately led to his joining the Guard.

This past May, Sergeant Howard was among the brave Iowans to deploy to the Middle East in support of Operation Inherent Resolve—a counterterrorism mission in Syria to fight against ISIS. Prior to this, he was deployed to Kosovo in 2020.

Sergeant Howard is a graduate of Marshalltown High School and worked as a laser engraving specialist at a company in his hometown before answering the call to serve.

His wife Arianna has shared that she wishes her husband will be remembered for his courage and bravery. I believe it is safe to say he will be so remembered.

My wife Barbara and my prayers are with Arianna, his parents, and all his family.

I would also like to recognize Sergeant Torres of Des Moines, IA. Sergeant Torres was deployed in the Middle East in support of Operation Inherent Resolve. A dedicated patriot, he served in Kosovo prior to his deployment to the Middle East.

Sergeant Edgar Torres was the first person in his family to serve in the U.S. military. His family and fellow servicemembers describe him as a selfless individual who put others before himself and cared deeply for his family.

Barbara and I—our hearts and prayers are with his family and loved ones.

Until Saturday, which was also the 339th birthday of the National Guard, it had been over a decade since we lost an Iowan in combat.

Our prayers for continued safety are with the many Iowans and Americans abroad, including those who remain in the Middle East to combat the evils of terrorism and stand as a symbol of freedom and hope.

The loss of these lives is an unfortunate reminder of the dangers of terrorism that are ever present. The United States must continue to strengthen our ability to combat the horrors of terrorism while preserving the liberties that make our country special.

I once again extend my gratitude to Sergeant Howard and Sergeant Torres, who served with honor, and my deepest condolences to their families.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

SENATE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, it has been a busy year here in the U.S. Senate. The new Republican majority has been working hard to deliver on our promises to the American people, and while there is still more to accomplish, we have gotten a lot done in just 1 year.

We are putting more money in Americans' pockets and supporting farmers, ranchers, and small businesses and helping them grow. We are making

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



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America safer and stronger, investing in law and order here at home and a strong military to safeguard our national security. We are creating a brighter future with new opportunities for Americans wherever they live and whatever their American dream may be.

I want to take some time today to talk about how Republicans' agenda is at work in my home State of South Dakota, and I want to begin with the tax relief that Republicans have delivered.

Whether I am visiting a small business in Isabel, SD, or talking to farmers at Dakotafest, higher prices are a concern for South Dakotans, as they are for many Americans. Affordability begins with more money in your pocket, which is exactly what Republicans have delivered with the working families tax cuts.

If Congress failed to act this year, a typical family in South Dakota would have had less money in their budget. They would have been looking at a \$2,500 tax hike next year. A typical farm would have seen a \$5,000 tax hike. Tens of thousands of small businesses would have seen their taxes go up as well.

Republicans were determined not to let that happen. Thanks to the working families tax cuts, which we passed in July as part of the One Big Beautiful Bill, South Dakotans won't see a tax hike next year. Instead, they will start seeing tax relief in the new year when the new tax law takes effect. They will be able to take advantage of a larger child tax credit, a bigger standard deduction, and a bonus deduction for seniors this tax season. They will see larger tax refunds come April, and they can expect that to be the new normal because the working families tax cuts deliver permanent—permanent—tax relief. That is right—no tax hike next year; no tax hike ever.

Working families aren't the only ones who will be benefiting from tax permanence. Thanks to Republicans' tax cuts, farmers, ranchers, and small business owners can also look forward to having more breathing room in their budgets next year. They will benefit from permanently lower tax rates. The 199A deduction now is also made permanent. The full expensing provision, also now permanent, makes it easier to replace a piece of equipment and upgrade their operations. And the now-permanent research and development expensing provision is already helping South Dakota businesses innovate.

Then there is the death tax relief. South Dakotans believe the death tax is fundamentally flawed. It threatens too many family farms and ranches and family businesses. Republicans agree. And so in the Working Families Tax Cuts, Republicans permanently raised the death tax exemption threshold to protect a lot more family farms, ranches, and businesses from this unfair tax.

South Dakota farmers and ranchers are always at the top of my priority

list. These hard-working South Dakotans are seeing more than tax relief. The One Big Beautiful Bill made significant updates to the farm safety net to support farmers and ranchers through the economic headwinds they continue to face.

Our bill increases reference prices for every covered commodity and makes these prices more responsive to market conditions in the coming years. It increases crop insurance coverage and affordability. It supports livestock producers by making existing programs more responsive to drought and by funding prevention of animal diseases that can devastate livestock. And it invests in critical conservation programs, including programs that support South Dakota's wild bird populations, something that matters a lot this time of year as hunters flock to our State for pheasant season.

Republicans also made the Agriculture appropriations bill a priority. This year's bill, which was signed into law in November, supports agricultural research programs and facilitates marketing U.S. ag products both domestically and internationally. And it provides robust funding for the Farm Service Agency, which producers depend on to access the programs which keep their operations running smoothly.

We are not just strengthening farms and ranches; we are also working to support rural communities in South Dakota and across the country. The needs of rural areas look a little different from other places' needs. They do receive attention from the new Republican majority this year. As I said, we prioritized the Ag appropriations bill, which delivered significant funding for rural broadband. And I worked with the Trump administration to develop internet access to unserved areas.

Then there is healthcare. Folks whose homes are in a rural area know simply accessing a doctor or emergency room can be challenging. That is all the more true with the troubling trend of rural hospital closures over the last several years. With the One Big Beautiful Bill, Republicans have taken action to support rural hospitals. All 50 States have now applied for funding from the One Big Beautiful Bill's Rural Health Transformation Program, including South Dakota.

South Dakota intends to address key priorities with this funding. The State is looking to recruit healthcare professionals to rural areas and train professionals for rural needs, incentivize regional hubs for emergency services and maternal health, and bolster healthcare facilities that serve rural parts of our State. This fund will truly be transformative for healthcare providers in South Dakota and other rural areas across the country.

We also used the One Big Beautiful Bill to repeal a burdensome staffing regulation that would have threatened the viability of a number of South Da-

kota nursing homes. The Biden staffing mandate was unworkable in my State and many others. The One Big Beautiful Bill rescinded it, ensuring South Dakota nursing homes can continue serving our residents.

There is a lot more I could talk about that we have accomplished for South Dakota this year. There are the investments in Ellsworth Air Force Base, including full funding for the B-21 mission and supporting infrastructure. There is the support for local law enforcement in the One Big Beautiful Bill and new border security resources to help stop illegal immigration and the flow of drugs across our southern border. Ron Parsons is confirmed and back on the job as South Dakota's U.S. attorney.

We have repealed electric vehicle mandates that were simply not realistic for a State like ours, where long distances and cold weather are a fact of life.

The Biden administration's WOTUS rule has been repealed as well, saving farmers and ranchers from massive compliance costs.

And we are even doing our part to keep the pheasant population in our State strong. I come here every day to work for South Dakota, and we have done a lot this year that South Dakotans can be happy about.

But it is not just my State. Republicans' agenda is supporting Americans in all 50 States. We are working to make America safer and more secure, put more money in Americans' pockets, and create new opportunities for a brighter future.

Mr. President, we are keeping our foot on the gas.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The 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.

SHOOTING AT BROWN UNIVERSITY AND SHOOTING IN SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, we convene after a weekend of both horror and grief. Saturday afternoon, as students were studying for finals, a masked gunman opened fire inside a classroom at Brown University. Nine students were injured, and two were killed. The victims were not even 20 years old. This is every father's and every mother's worst nightmare. For now, the shooter remains at large, and we urge residents in the area to listen