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Senate

The Senate met at 2 p.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, the protector of our dreams, we praise Your righteous Name. Lord, December 7 reminds us of a season of infamy. At that time, our Nation confronted greater challenges than we face today. Remind our Senators and Nation that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself. May our lawmakers not repeat past mistakes, always remembering that eternal vigilance is freedom's price. Help us to remember that we will be buffeted by winds of fear only when we forget how You have protected us in the past. If Your power prevailed in our past, it can still conquer all our present and future dangers, toils, and snares. May we never forget that in everything You are working for the good of those who love You.

We pray in Your merciful 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.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COTTON). The Democratic leader is recognized.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING BILL

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I have heard reports that the Speaker has an-

nounced that Congress will be in session next week. I don't know if that is valid. I haven't heard from him myself, but the December 11 deadline was a deadline that the Republicans set and we didn't.

If the Congress fails to finish our business by December 11, it will be because Republicans continue to insist on extraneous poison pill riders in the government funding bill. These are Republican riders, Republican earmarks, and as long as they are there, there can be no legislation.

Without legislation, the government shuts down again—as it did a couple of years ago—because of Republicans.

FIGHTING ISIS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, last night, President Obama spoke in stark terms about the threat terrorism poses to the United States. He detailed the extraordinary efforts our government is taking to protect Americans. He also outlined a strong plan for continuing to combat terrorism at home and abroad. President Obama is right to say the first thing Congress should do is close the loophole that lets the FBI terror suspects buy assault weapons such as those used in the San Bernardino shooting.

Senate Democrats support President Obama's plan to fight ISIS and protect America. President Obama has made it clear that Democrats do not believe we should put thousands of troops on the ground in the middle of another civil war in the Middle East. But we do support the President's strategy of continuing to go after ISIS in the air with our coalition partners, targeting their leadership, oil infrastructure, and heavy weapons.

We know that it must be the local forces on the ground that ultimately fight for and hold their ground because it is their land.

Senate Democrats understand that the Syrian war will only be resolved

diplomatically, with all parties supporting the removal of Assad. We also know that we can do more to address the threats from terrorists. That is why beginning today Senate Democrats will unveil a series of proposals to take the fight to ISIS while enhancing our protection of Americans at home.

There are a few important steps we must take in order to combat ISIS's terrorism. The Democratic plan would create a new ISIS czar, one person who is fully empowered and unifies the Federal Government's efforts in fighting ISIS. We did it with Ebola. We certainly can do it with this scourge that is facing our country, ISIS. I am pleased that President Obama has taken a first step in that direction.

To continue targeted airstrikes on ISIS strongholds and oil supplies and to increase support for anti-ISIS local fighters on the ground are part of the plan.

We must also cut off ISIS money through new sanctions.

ISIS runs its reign of terror in Iraq and Syria through extortion, oil sales, and theft. Senate Democrats' legislation imposes new sanctions—and they are tough—including a cutoff from the U.S. and international financial systems if people knowingly facilitate financial transactions with ISIS.

One of the things that would help is that we have a person who has been waiting for hundreds of days to be confirmed. What is his job? He works in the Treasury Department with the State Department to stop financing of terrorism. The Republicans—for reasons totally not understood by anyone—are blocking voting on this person. The job is vacant.

We also believe that we should improve intelligence training between the United States and our allies in the fight against ISIS. Some of that has started, of course.

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



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