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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

PRAYER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Today's opening prayer will be offered by Steve Berger, pastor of Grace Chapel in Leiper's Fork, TN.

The guest Chaplain offered the following prayer:

Let us pray together.

Almighty God, King of Creation and Ruler of the Universe, we thank You for Your undeniably sovereign, merciful, and benevolent hand in the forming, leading, and blessing of these United States.

Father, thank You for revealing Your will and Your ways to this Nation and its leaders through Your sacred, Holy Word.

We pray, therefore, that we would be united in doing what is good in Your sight, and what You require of us, to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God.

Father, may our leaders and our Nation also walk in the faith of Abraham, the integrity of Moses, the wisdom of Solomon, the courage of the Prophets, and the self-sacrificing love and compassion of Jesus.

O God, when we fail to walk in Your ways, and sin against You and one another, may we be quick to humble ourselves and pray, to seek Your face, to turn from our wicked ways, that You might hear from Heaven, forgive our sin, and heal our land.

Remember mercy, O God, and revive us in Your ways, that this Nation might be blessed for generations to come.

We ask all these things through the Name of Jesus and by the power of the Holy Spirit. 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. HELLER). The Senator from Tennessee.

WELCOMING THE GUEST CHAPLAIN

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, I rise to speak of Pastor Steve Berger. It moves me to hear his voice echoing throughout this Chamber. He is one of the pre-eminent spiritual leaders in our Nation. He prays daily with his wife Sarah, who happens to be in the Chamber.

He prays daily for our Nation. There is a purity of his mission in leading a church that is making a difference in our State, and I think making a difference in our country, leading efforts not only here but around the world to bring people together, and I am so thrilled this Chamber and the people of our country are able to witness someone who I believe to be one of the greatest spiritual leaders in our Nation.

I only hope more people would be able to hear from him. Truly, it is a very moving moment for me to have a friend like Steve Berger, who means so much to our State and country, before us. I thank him for his willingness to do this.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I welcome Steve Berger and thank Senator CORKER for arranging for him to be here today. Steve is, indeed, one of our most distinguished Tennesseans. We welcome his family and some of his friends who are with us in the Gallery.

Chaplain Barry Black has reminded us that this tradition of opening the Senate with a prayer has been with us since the Senate began, and the Senate has had a Chaplain before the First Amendment to our Constitution was

adopted. This tradition is an essential part of the American character, and having Steve Berger here to help us celebrate that essential part of the American character is a very special moment for me as well as for Senator CORKER.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION BILL

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, President Obama's approach to national security policy began with unworkable ideas on the campaign trail, and it has been marked by some consistent themes, like inflexible commitments to drawing down our conventional military posture from across the globe, like an excessive reliance on international organizations, like a tendency toward the use of Special Operations forces to train and equip units in other countries.

What do we see as we look back now at the twilight of his Presidency? We have seen increased instability in places such as Iraq, Afghanistan, and Yemen. We have seen the evolution of Al Qaeda in Iraq into ISIL and its expansion into Libya, Syria, and the Sinai.

In just a few short months, the next Commander in Chief, regardless of party, will be faced with the consequences of the President's failed foreign policy and will need to adapt an insufficient defense modernization program to tackle both the challenges posed by terrorism and by adversaries like China, Russia, and Iran.

This is why we need to use the remaining months of this administration to help prepare the next administration, regardless of party, to deal with the news it is about to inherit. That is

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



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what we are doing on the floor right now. The Defense bill before us will modernize our military and provide our troops with more of the tools they need to confront the threats we face. It will help prepare the next Commander in Chief to confront the complex challenges of today and of tomorrow. It is serious policy—policy that will keep our country safe, and after years of this administration's spin and failures, that is what our people deserve.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

PARITY IN THE BUDGET

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I just left my "Welcome to Washington," which I have been having for many years. I had about 85 people from Nevada, my constituents—our constituents—and they asked me what I had done in the Senate that I remember. So I told them a few things. They also asked me if I have a regret, and I do.

It takes a lot of gall for my friend the Republican leader to talk about foreign policy. My biggest regret is having voted for the Iraq war. I was misled, as a number of people were, but it didn't take me long to figure that out. So I became convinced it was a mistake, and I spoke out loud and clear.

Why was it a mistake? It was the worst foreign policy decision made in the history of our country. That invasion has caused the death of—no one knows for sure but about one-half million Iraqis—500,000 dead men, women, and children. At this stage, because of the invasion, we have now complete instability in Syria. About 300,000 are dead there. Millions have been displaced, driven into Europe and other places. Iran is stronger than they would have been but for the war. The whole Middle East is destabilized.

When President Bush took office, because of the work done in the Clinton administration, we had a balanced budget. Can you imagine that? A balanced budget. We were spending less than we were taking in as a country. When Bush took office, we had a surplus of, over 10 years, \$7 trillion. Where is that money now? It has been used with a credit card—a credit card that paid for two wars. I repeat, unpaid for and tax cuts unpaid for. We are now upside down.

So for my friend to talk about failed foreign policy takes a tremendous amount of mental gymnastics. We have been clear from the start, enough on the war in Iraq. It is a disaster that will be written about for centuries because the full impact of it is not over yet. We have been clear from the start of this Congress, the appropriations process needs to stick to last year's budget agreement. It is the law, which maintains parity between the Pen-

tagon and the middle class, and avoid poison-pill riders.

Today, we vote on Senator McCain's amendment to add \$18 billion in Pentagon spending beyond what Congress agreed to in last year's bipartisan agreement. In response, Senator REED of Rhode Island and Senator MIKULSKI of Maryland have offered an amendment that would add security and other funding in America to maintain the parity to which both parties agreed in the budget law passed last year.

Our amendment would increase funding to combat Zika. By the way, we had a briefing yesterday by the head of the Centers for Disease Control. The man who is in charge of NIH, with this terrible virus that is sweeping this part of the world, told us they are desperate for money. They are desperate for money to do their research to prepare vaccines.

Our amendment would also increase money for local police to fight the opioid scourge, to improve our infrastructure around the country, and to do something about the money that has never been provided to take care of the devastation that hit Flint, MI, with the lead in the water. The security of our great country depends on more than bombs and bullets. I support the military. I have my entire career. I know how gallantly they fight.

In my "Welcome to Washington" today, there was a young cadet there. I brought him up first thing to show him off. This young man is one of the finest students in America. He could have gone to school anywhere. Not only was he a good student, he was a good athlete. He chose the Military Academy. He believes in serving his country.

I do everything I can to support the military, but our security depends on more than bombs and bullets. It depends on the FBI, Homeland Security, Drug Enforcement Administration, and these many other myriad things that take place in our country that need our attention.

If Republicans pass this amendment of Senator McCain's to block a similar increase for the middle class—Senator REED's and Senator MIKULSKI's amendment—they will have a broken budget agreement, and they will grind the Defense appropriations bill to a halt. We have put everyone on notice. We have done it before, but let me reiterate. If they break the budget agreement with the McCain amendment, the Republicans will be stopping the appropriations process on the Defense appropriations bill. We will not get to the appropriations bill. That is not a threat. It is a fact.

The solution this year is the same as last year's: stick by the budget agreement and give fair treatment to the Pentagon and nondefense spending. They should be on equal grounds.

Mr. President, I see no one on the floor. I yield the floor and ask the Chair to announce the business of the day.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2017

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 2943, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2943) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2017 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

Pending:

McCain amendment No. 4229, to address unfunded priorities of the Armed Forces.

Reed/Mikulski amendment No. 4549 (to amendment No. 4229), to authorize parity for defense and nondefense spending pursuant to the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, is the time automatically divided?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. It is not.

Mr. REID. I suggest the absence of a quorum and ask that the time be divided equally between the majority and minority.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The time is not generally divided.

Mr. REID. Oh, it is not divided.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ROUNDS). Without objection, it is so ordered.

72ND ANNIVERSARY OF D-DAY

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, this week, as we are debating the National Defense Authorization Act, we also celebrate the 72nd anniversary of D-day. On June 6, 1944, more than 160,000 allied troops, including 70,000 brave Americans, did something that no one had ever tried before—a cross-channel landing the size and scope of which had never been envisioned as a reality by warriors. These brave soldiers stormed the beaches of Normandy.

I had an opportunity a few years ago to visit the Normandy American Cemetery and Memorial. I walked through the cemetery with a Belgian guide who had a great appreciation for everything our American soldiers had done to try to bring freedom to Europe again. By the way, later that summer he visited the National World War I Memorial in Kansas City, MO. We talked about the cemetery. One of my sons and one of my grandsons were with us, and they had a chance to identify two brothers buried side by side and a father and son who were buried side by side. These Missourians had given their life on D-day.