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Senate

The Senate met at 3 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, our hearts are steadfast toward You. Lead us safely to the refuge of Your choosing, for You desire to give us a future and a hope. Provide us with grateful hearts to appreciate Your mercies that are new each day.

Today, give our Senators the power to do Your will, as they realize more fully that they are servants of Heaven and stewards of Your mysteries. Lord, give them Your perspective on their daily tasks and every decision they must make. May faithfulness to You become the focus of their living, keeping them from becoming careless about their spiritual and moral growth.

We pray in Your sacred 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 MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. YOUNG). The majority leader is recognized.

MONTENEGRO'S ACCESSION INTO NATO

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, at the end of the Cold War, many wondered whether NATO could or should survive absent the glaring threat from the Soviet Union, which tied together a diverse coalition of Western countries.

That Soviet threat held the alliance together through myriad issues and challenges of burden sharing, nuclear doctrine, and how to balance the roles of the European Union and a security alliance.

The United States, as a global superpower, was at times criticized for not paying enough attention to the alliance and at other times for its heavy-handed leadership.

When the Berlin Wall came down, NATO was forced to evolve. At its core, the alliance is not only about defeating a common threat but also about common values.

When our Nation was attacked on September 11, NATO acted on September 12 and invoked article 5 of the Washington Treaty for the first time in history, and NATO partners have worked to assist us in the war on terror ever since.

With Russia's resurgence and quest for renewed greater power status, NATO has given notice that it will stand up for Western democracies, as well, and has continued to do so.

Let's be clear. President Putin mourns the fall of the Soviet Union. He is intent on using all elements of national power to expand Russia's sphere of influence. He is also threatened by the examples of representative democracies anywhere near Russia's borders, and he is accordingly trying to intimidate other nations from seeking entry into the alliance.

The Partnership for Peace, established in 1994, has given newly independent states a path toward developing capabilities that would bind them closer to the democracies of the West. It has given them something to strive for. Through the use of the Membership Action Plan, NATO is capable of setting forth the various reforms required for membership of those countries that aspire to join the alliance.

This is the path Poland took—and Romania, the Czech Republic, and so many of our friends in Eastern Europe.

Today it is the path Montenegro is taking.

A positive vote on the NATO accession treaty that is before us tells those countries that complete NATO member action plans that this undertaking, while difficult, is not futile.

Let us remember that we face a variety of threats in the world—from ISIL to the Syrian civil war to China's military buildup and territorial ambitions—and our European allies face many threats as well.

NATO remains an incredibly valuable alliance. It is an alliance, however, that must be sustained. That is why we ask our partners to meet their commitments to NATO by spending 2 percent of GDP on defense so the alliance can improve its capabilities, and that is why we must meet our own commitments, including voting yes on the accession treaty before the Senate today.

NOMINATION OF NEIL GORSUCH

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, on another matter, last week Supreme Court nominee Judge Neil Gorsuch came before the Senate Judiciary Committee for his confirmation hearing. His testimony reaffirmed what we already know about Judge Gorsuch. He is fair and impartial. He has an outstanding legal mind, and he is humble and well respected. He also has a record of building consensus.

Here is what he said about that record at his hearing.

I have decided . . . over 2,700 cases, and my law clerks tell me that 97 percent of them have been unanimous, 99 percent I've been in the majority. They tell me as well that according to the Congressional Research Service, my opinions have attracted the fewest number of dissents from my colleagues of anyone I've served with that they studied over the last 10 years.

So let's repeat that. Judge Gorsuch has ruled in more than 2,700 cases. He has been in the majority 99 percent of the time, and 97 percent have been unanimous decisions.

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



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