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Senate

The Senate met at 11 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable SHELLEY MOORE CAPITO, a Senator from the State of West Virginia.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal God, thank You for Your great mercies for us, for while we are yet seeking You, You find us. Before we call, You answer, and while we are speaking, You fulfill Your purposes.

Guide our lawmakers on their legislative pilgrimage. Lord, provide them with a spirit of wisdom so that they will be able to discern what is best. May they strive to honor You in their thoughts, words, and actions. Help them to faithfully seek truth and justice for all rather than privilege for a few.

O God, give us all the courage to go forth to live as we have prayed.

We pray in Your strong Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer 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.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, April 28, 2017.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby

appoint the Honorable SHELLEY MOORE CAPITO, a Senator from the State of West Virginia, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ORRIN G. HATCH,
President pro tempore.

Mrs. CAPITO thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

CONTINUING RESOLUTION AND COAL MINER HEALTHCARE BENEFITS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, with cooperation from our friends across the aisle, the Senate will pass a short-term continuing resolution before this evening so Members of both parties can continue to work on a longer term solution.

The legislation should pass today, and it will carry us through next week so that a bipartisan final agreement can be reached and so the Members will have time to review the legislation before we take it up.

Importantly, this 1-week extension will ensure that thousands of retired coal miners and their families, including many in my home State of Kentucky and in the home State of the Acting President pro tempore, West Virginia, will not lose their healthcare benefits.

Protecting these miners and their families from losing their healthcare has been a top priority of mine as well as the occupant of the Chair. Last year, I fought for a long-term extension of healthcare benefits, and earlier this year, I introduced my own bill to provide a permanent fix for miners' healthcare. I will continue to fight on their behalf to secure a permanent solution on this issue in the larger funding bill.

Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. 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 Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. I thank the distinguished Acting President pro tempore.

CONTINUING RESOLUTION

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, as we know, the Senate is considering a stopgap—continuing resolution—to keep the government of the American people open for business. The stopgap, of course, helps us forget the fact that in November we had all the appropriations bills ready to go, but the leadership asked us to hold it off.

Now, I am going to support this 1-week continuing resolution, because I believe we are close to a bipartisan agreement that would avoid the devastating consequences of a government shutdown and save the Congress from once again facing the disruption and humiliation of failing to meet Congress's obligation to fund the basic functions of our government.

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



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