



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 115th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 163

WASHINGTON, WEDNESDAY, MAY 3, 2017

No. 76

Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.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.

Our Lord and God, we would not journey through this day without contact with You. Increase our faith, hope, and love, that we may receive Your promises.

Be merciful to our lawmakers and fill them with Your hope. May they be fully persuaded in their minds about receiving guidance from You for the decisions they make.

Lord, deliver them from a reluctance to respect honest differences as they remember their ultimate accountability to You. Provide them with Divine insights as they grapple with complexities that require nuanced choices. May their ultimate goal be to serve You by doing what is best for our Nation and world.

We pray in Your strong 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. PAUL). The majority leader is recognized.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING LEGISLATION

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, later today, the House will vote to pass a funding agreement that advances a

number of America's priorities, achieving important things that would not have been possible under the previous administration.

Let's take the border. President Trump and the Republican Congress made securing the border a priority, and this funding bill acts on it. After years of an administration that failed to get serious on border security, this bill provides the largest border security funding increase in a decade.

Passing this bill means updating physical border infrastructure. It means enhancements in surveillance technology. It means increasing support for border personnel. It means finally providing resources to end the practice of catch and release.

On securing our border, this bill obviously makes a departure from the Obama years, and it is an important step forward.

Let's take defense. President Trump and the Republican Congress made rebuilding our military a priority, and this funding bill acts on it. After years of an administration that drew down our conventional force structure and failed to address increasing threats across the globe, this bill provides a critically needed downpayment on rebuilding our military. Passing this bill means allowing our force to retain higher levels of end strength. It means funding the largest military pay raise in 6 years. It means replacing munitions used in the fight against ISIL. It means finally ignoring the Obama-era demand of requiring defense funding increases to be equally matched to nondefense increases.

On rebuilding our military, this bill obviously makes a departure from the Obama years and is another important step forward. These are notable wins, and they wouldn't have happened without this administration's tireless work in conjunction with the Republican Congress.

Of course, there is further to go in both areas. We know more work re-

mains when it comes to strengthening our border infrastructure and stemming the tide of illegal immigration. We know more work remains when it comes to restoring our military's combat readiness and meeting the full needs of the force.

But this legislation represents a step in the right direction in both of these areas, and it advances conservative priorities in many others. It adheres to the spending caps, it reforms bureaucracy, and it consolidates, eliminates, or rescinds funds for more than 150 government programs and initiatives.

It supports the implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act, which shifts control of education out of Washington, and it extends an important school choice program. It helps tackle terrorism, fight crime, support veterans, protect life, reform the IRS, and freeze funding for it.

It cuts funding for the EPA, prohibits funding for President Obama's climate slush fund, and advances an all-of-the-above energy policy that prioritizes research on technical advancements in nuclear, natural gas, and coal power generation.

This research funding, along with the bill's support for troubled coal mining communities and dislocated miners, is important for States like mine, as is the provision I was proud to secure that will permanently protect healthcare benefits for thousands of retired coal miners and their families.

This bill also extends resources for a pilot program I worked with Congressman HAL ROGERS to secure, which will fund the reclamation and development of abandoned mine sites.

Moreover, this bill also provides significant new resources to tackle the prescription opioid and heroin epidemic that continues to ravage communities in Kentucky and across our country.

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



Printed on recycled paper.

S2687