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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable LUTHER STRANGE, a Senator from the State of Alabama.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Faithful Father, as our lawmakers face the challenges of this day, infuse their minds with a renewed sense of how much You have invested in them. Lead them to live for Your glory, embracing Your vision for our Nation and world. Lord, guide and inspire them with the great plans You want to accomplish through their work. May the knowledge that You are with them eviscerate fear, for You are our Lord and Savior.

Help us all to surrender to Your transforming power so that Your will may be accomplished on Earth, even as it is done in Heaven.

And, Lord, bless our wonderful pages as they prepare to leave Capitol Hill.

We pray in Your merciful 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, June 8, 2017.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable LUTHER STRANGE, a Senator from the State of Alabama, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ORRIN G. HATCH,
President pro tempore.

Mr. STRANGE thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—H.R. 1628

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I understand there is a bill at the desk due for a second reading.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will read the bill by title for the second time.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 1628) to provide for reconciliation pursuant to title II of the concurrent resolution on the budget for fiscal year 2017.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, in order to place the bill on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I object to further proceedings.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection is heard.

The bill will be placed on the calendar.

IRAN SANCTIONS BILL

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, yesterday, Senators voted on an overwhelming bipartisan basis—91 to 8—to advance critical legislation granting the administration more of the policy tools it needs to hold Iran accountable for its actions. We must now keep

working toward final passage. The bill makes clear that Congress recognizes that Iran's aggressive behavior and efforts to expand its revolution across the broader Middle East must be stopped.

Unfortunately, the Obama administration's desire to draw down our conventional military presence from the Persian Gulf and Iraq created the self-defeating imperative to avoid nation-state conflict at any cost, and they were reluctant to take any action that might upset the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action—in other words, the so-called Iran deal. They kept this hands-off approach even when Iran supported terrorism and Shia militias and even as they harassed U.S. ships at sea—actions that were not part of the nuclear program or the Iran deal.

Advancing this bill makes the logical point that our Nation needs a comprehensive strategy to deal with all areas of Iran's aggression. It will give the current administration more of the tools it needs to take a stronger approach than the previous administration. It includes new mandatory ballistic missile sanctions, new terrorism sanctions, and a mechanism to ensure better enforcement of the arms embargo. These sanctions represent another key measure we can take now to keep American families safer and to support our allies over in that region.

I want to again note the broad bipartisan support this legislation has already received and encourage my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to continue working together so we can pass it.

HEALTHCARE LEGISLATION

Mr. MCCONNELL. On another matter, Mr. President, just this week, Ohioans learned that a major insurer will exit their State's ObamaCare exchanges next year, leaving thousands in at least 18 counties without a single option—not one; not a single option—

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



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