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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable TOM COTTON, a Senator from the State of Arkansas.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Almighty God, our refuge and strength, a very present help in turbulent times, thank You that though evil seems to prosper, You continue to guard and guide us with Your loving providence.

Lord, the challenges that our lawmakers face require more than human wisdom. Please shower our Senators with Your wisdom, directing them through life's complexities to Your desired destination. Remind them daily that human life is as fleeting as fading flowers and withering grass. May they find peace in the knowledge that You love and accept them unconditionally. Keep them always in Your care, doing for them more than they can ask or imagine.

We pray in Your Holy 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 senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, September 6, 2017.

To the Senate:

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

ORRIN G. HATCH,
President pro tempore.

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

HURRICANE HARVEY DISASTER RELIEF, PREVENTING A DEFAULT, AND FUNDING THE GOVERNMENT

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, as I said yesterday, Congress has a number of pressing issues to address in the coming days. There are three critically important things before us that need to be done very quickly: pass disaster relief legislation to allow us to rebuild from Harvey and prepare for future disasters headed our way, such as Irma; prevent a default so those emergency resources can actually get to Americans who need them; and, of course, keep the government funded. These are the President's immediate priorities, these are my immediate priorities, and they are critically important to establishing credibility and stability as our country continues to recover from one record-setting storm and prepare for yet another. Harvey has already unleashed more rain than any other single storm recorded in the continental United States. Irma has already forced the entire State of Florida into a state of emergency.

I would like to repeat two quotes I shared that are even more relevant

now given the further approach of Irma. This is the President's budget director:

Given the need for additional spending as a result of disaster response and initial recovery from Hurricane Harvey, the administration continues to urge the Congress to act expeditiously to ensure that the debt ceiling does not affect these critical response and recovery efforts.

That is the budget director.

That is because, as the Treasury Secretary explained, "If Congress appropriates the money, but I don't have the ability to borrow more money and pay for it, we're not going to be able to get that money" to the States, and they need it. The need for certainty now is incredibly important.

I have been having conversations with the Democratic leader on my view of the way forward on these issues, and this morning he and I, along with House leaders from both parties, will head to the White House for a meeting to discuss the issues further. It is good to see that Congress has already made steady progress.

I again thank the President and his team for working closely with us to ensure that families and States are able to get the help they need and for working with us to prevent a default or lapse in government service that could get in the way of that help actually being delivered.

As we work on these immediate priorities, Members will also continue working on other critically important items, such as tax reform, national security, and filling vacancies across the Federal Government. We clearly have a lot to do in the coming weeks and months, but we will all keep working to tackle these issues as soon as possible.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

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



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