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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.

Eternal Savior, we thank You for the fellowship of Your Spirit and Your consolations of love. May our lawmakers remember that You are their rock and refuge. Lord, speak peace to their hearts in these turbulent times, guiding them along the path of Your wisdom. Reward their efforts with a joyful harvest, as they strive to build up and not tear down. Raise them above discord and division, helping them to work together to keep America strong.

We are grateful for the favor You have given this Nation and for surrounding us with the shield of Your compassion, mercy, and love. Strong Deliverer, accept our grateful praise.

We pray in Your mighty 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. HELLER). The majority leader is recognized.

THE BUDGET AND TAX REFORM

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, the Senate is taking the next critical step in passing the comprehensive, fiscally responsible budget before us. It is pretty obvious that this is a good budget,

and that is true whether you are looking at it from a fiscal perspective or an economic one.

Take the fiscal side first. It reins in government spending. It protects Social Security. It complies fully with the previous spending caps, while also providing for an increase for defense resources if a bipartisan agreement can be reached. In short, it is a fiscally responsible budget that will help put the Federal Government on a path to balance.

On the economic side, this budget can help our country realize better and more sustained economic growth, which is critical, given the last decade of missed opportunities for the middle class. One way this budget can help our economy is by providing legislative tools to advance tax reform.

As I have said many times before, tax reform represents the most important thing we can do today to get our economy reaching for its true potential. Tax reform is all about getting America going again and growing again. It aims to take more money out of Washington's pockets and put more money in middle-class pockets, and it represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to replace a failing tax bill that holds Americans back with one that works for them. Passing this budget is critical to getting tax reform done so we can strengthen our economy, after years of stagnation under the previous administration.

I know Members are eager to continue proposing amendments to this budget. We already adopted some good ideas yesterday. For instance, the Senate adopted an amendment offered by Senator HELLER to provide tax relief to American families with children so they can have more money to make ends meet.

We also adopted an amendment from Senator COLLINS to provide relief to small businesses, which have been responsible for the creation of about two-thirds of the net jobs in recent years.

That is according to statistics from the Small Business Administration. Both of these amendments reinforce the goals of the tax reform framework developed by the President, his team, and the tax-writing committees in Congress.

Today we will consider more ideas from colleagues on both sides of the aisle. I want to thank, particularly, Chairman ENZI and the members of the Senate Budget Committee for their good work in getting us to this point. The budget they produced is important to our fiscal and our economic future. I look forward to passing it soon.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. STRANGE). Without objection, it is so ordered.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION ON THE BUDGET, FISCAL YEAR 2018

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H. Con. Res. 71, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 71) establishing the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2018 and setting forth the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2019 through 2027.

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



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