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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable BEN SASSE, a Senator from the State of Nebraska.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal Lord God, as the waters fill the sea, let America be filled with people who know You. Help our citizens to live for Your honor. Increase our faith, hope, and love, that we may receive Your promises.

Lord, be merciful to our Nation, for You are our hope. Today, inspire our lawmakers with the music of Your wisdom, that they may bring hope out of despair and joy out of sadness. Teach them to celebrate even in the darkness because You are the God who saves us. Give us all the strength to not become weary in doing what is right, knowing that in due season a bountiful harvest will come.

We pray in Your great 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, November 14, 2017.

To the Senate:

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

appoint the Honorable BEN SASSE, a Senator from the State of Nebraska, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ORRIN G. HATCH,
President pro tempore.

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

TAX REFORM

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, tax reform represents our best chance today to get the economy living up to its true potential, and it is a once-in-a-generation opportunity.

The last time major tax reform happened was more than 30 years ago. In the years since, our country, our economy, and the global marketplace have changed in profound ways. Moreover, the lingering economic challenges of the last decade only compound the urgency to get this done.

Jobs went overseas. Wages didn't grow like they should have. Hard-working families worried if they would be able to send their kids to college or save for retirement. It is clear that families and small businesses had a rough go of it during the Obama economy.

They deserve relief. They deserve the chance for something better. Tax reform is an important way to help get the economy, jobs, and opportunity moving again in a serious way.

Listen to this small business owner and franchisee from Lexington, KY. She recently wrote to my office expressing the need for tax reform: "With the rising cost of doing business," she wrote, "and the [g]overnment regulations that have been imposed on small businesses over the past several years, we desperately need tax relief and com-

petitive rates. The current high tax rate that I pay," she continued, "reduces the amount of earnings I can invest into my businesses, [into my] employees, and [into my] community."

For small business owners in Kentucky and throughout the country, we want to make it easier to grow, invest, and hire. For families everywhere, we want to make taxes lower, simpler, and fairer. In short, we want to take more money out of Washington's pockets and put more in the pockets of the middle class. That is why we are pushing tax reform.

Yesterday, the Senate Finance Committee began to mark up its tax reform legislation. The meetings this week represent the next step in a years-long campaign, which included dozens of hearings and significant input from both sides.

Chairman HATCH said yesterday:

First and foremost, this legislation will provide much-needed tax relief to American workers and families. It reduces rates across the board, particularly for those in the middle class who have struggled to get through the past 8 years of economic stagnation.

Indeed, under the Finance Committee's proposal, the typical American family of four earning the median income could see a tax cut of nearly \$1,500.

As these hearings continue, I would like once again to commend Chairman HATCH for his leadership of the committee and his commitment to regular order. As the tax proposal advances through an open process, members of the Finance Committee will consider many of the hundreds of amendments that have already been filed on the bill. Once the committee completes its work, the bill will come before the full Senate.

Along with our colleagues in the House, as well as President Trump and his team, we will continue to push for tax reform to fulfill important shared goals for our country. We have a lot of work ahead of us, but we are committed to getting this done for the

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



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