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Senate

The Senate met at 12 noon and was called to order by the Honorable JONI ERNST, a Senator from the State of Iowa.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Almighty God, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, thank You for this opportunity to boldly approach Your throne of grace, finding help during life's challenging seasons. It is at Your throne that we obtain mercy to sustain us through life's hardships.

Lord, we build these moments of silent anticipation into our day, aware of our need of You. Be for our lawmakers their shelter in the time of storm. Prepare them to meet whatever difficulties that may lurk in life's shadows as they seek to cultivate an experiential relationship with You. Lord, give them the wisdom to persevere through tough times and never give up.

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 29, 2017.

To the Senate:

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

appoint the Honorable JONI ERNST, a Senator from the State of Iowa, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ORRIN G. HATCH,
President pro tempore.

Mrs. ERNST thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2018—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I move to proceed to Calendar No. 165, S. 1519.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 165, S. 1519, a bill to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2018 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

TAX REFORM

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, during the last decade, hard-working American families have tried to get ahead, but they too often faced insurmountable barriers. The economy was sluggish, paychecks were stagnant, and jobs and opportunities stayed literally out of reach. The people we represent deserve a whole lot better than that, and it is time for us to deliver. It is time to take our feet off the brakes and get our economy going again and growing again. We could do that through tax reform.

Every American who has ever interacted with the IRS already knows that our Tax Code is broken. Rates are too high, deductions and loopholes are

too complex to understand, and it is too easy for well-connected elites to take advantage. Passing tax reform is the single most important thing we can do right now to shift the economy into high gear and deliver much-needed relief to American families.

The Senate Finance Committee has developed a bill that is the result of literally years of work, dozens of hearings, and a full committee markup. I once again commend Chairman HATCH for his leadership of this committee and thank him for producing legislation to unleash the potential of our economy, to create jobs, and to keep them right here in America.

Throughout this process, we have kept middle-class families at the center of our efforts. We want to make their taxes lower, simpler, and fairer. That is why our plan would give the typical family of four with a median income a tax cut of close to \$2,200 a year. A single parent raising his or her child on a modest income could also see a tax cut of nearly \$1,400. These are real savings that can help families plan for their future and actually get ahead.

The Finance Committee's tax reform proposal also provides substantial relief to small businesses. We want to make it easier for them to grow, to invest, and, of course, to hire. The bill also will remove incentives for corporations to ship jobs and investments overseas.

Finally, our tax reform proposal delivers relief to low- and middle-income Americans by repealing ObamaCare's individual mandate tax. For too long, families have suffered under an unpopular tax from an unworkable law. Repealing this ObamaCare tax will help those who need it most.

Yesterday, the Senate Budget Committee, under Chairman MIKE ENZI's leadership, reported out a bill, including our proposal to reform the Tax Code. I thank Chairman ENZI and the members of the Budget Committee for their outstanding work to get us to

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



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