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No. 2

House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Friday, January 5, 2018, at 12 p.m.

Senate

THURSDAY, JANUARY 4, 2018

The Senate met at 11 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable DAN SULLIVAN, a Senator from the State of Alaska.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal God, the King of Glory, Your never failing providence sustains us.

Today, inspire our lawmakers with the music of Your wisdom, that they may bring hope, joy, and unity to our Nation and world. Remind our Senators that even in the darkness, You are a sure guide. Lord, energize them to strive to transform dark yesterdays into bright tomorrows.

And, Lord, in this new year, go before us to show us the way, behind us to press us forward, beside us to give us courage, above us to provide protection, and within us to give us Your wisdom and discernment.

We pray in Your loving 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, January 4, 2018.

To the Senate:

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

ORRIN G. HATCH,
President pro tempore.

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

FUNDING THE GOVERNMENT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I spoke yesterday about the need to fund the Federal Government by January 19. Members in both parties, including leadership on both sides, have publicly stated their desire to approach this issue in a serious and collaborative manner, and those sentiments were renewed in a productive meeting we had yesterday. I am optimistic that we can begin 2018 with a bipartisan, 2-year funding agreement that meets several critically important objectives.

To begin with, any agreement must provide our Armed Forces with the re-

sources they need to fulfill their missions. That means setting aside the misguided notion that new defense spending needs to be matched dollar for dollar by new nondefense spending.

Some describe this notion as parity, but, of course, there was no parity at all in the damaging cuts that the Budget Control Act inflicted on our national security. Since fiscal year 2013, discretionary defense spending has been cut by \$85 billion more than nondefense spending.

That number has real consequences for the men and women in harm's way who serve our country. Last year, Secretary of Defense Mattis testified: "No enemy in the field has done more to harm the combat readiness of our military" than these self-inflicted budget reductions.

Nothing about this issue needs to be partisan. During the Obama administration, Defense Secretaries Panetta, Hagel, and Carter all similarly warned that sequestration cuts would handicap our men and women in uniform. Those were all Secretaries of Defense during the Obama administration. Unfortunately, at a time when our country faces a myriad of threats and strategic challenges around the globe, experts agree that this is exactly what has happened.

Congress has a golden opportunity to put aside political calculations and prioritize the actual needs of America's all-volunteer military. There is no reason that an arbitrary formula, which bears no relationship—none—to the real needs of our Armed Forces, should dictate the degree to which we fund them. Our men and women in uniform

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



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