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Senate

The Senate met at 3 p.m. and was called to order by the Honorable BILL CASSIDY, a Senator from the State of Louisiana.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal God, abide with us. When other helpers fail and comfort flees, strengthen our Senators with Your might. Provide them with a perseverance that completes the task, a courage to face every fear, and a fidelity that brings glory to Your Name. Help them to live such exemplary lives that they will infect others with the contagion of love for You and country. Lord, give them the gentleness and symmetry to bring healing to our Nation and world. Whatever they do, may they do it for You, the Author and Finisher of our destinies.

We pray in Your strong 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 8, 2018.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable BILL CASSIDY, a Sen-

ator from the State of Louisiana, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ORRIN G. HATCH,
President pro tempore.

Mr. CASSIDY 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, 1 million Americans and counting will be starting 2018 with more money in their pockets, thanks to tax reform.

Special bonuses are on the way for employees across a wide range of industries. Businesses throughout America are taking advantage of more competitive tax rates and passing the savings along to their workers. As a result, employees at companies from Visa and AT&T to Turning Point Brands in Louisville, KY, are seeing results. For working parents in Kentucky and all across the Nation, these bonuses and other permanent changes will make a big difference in family budgets.

Of course, in just weeks, families will see the benefits of tax reform hit their paychecks. Lower tax rates will mean less money withheld for the IRS and more take-home pay for more hard-working Americans.

I am particularly proud of the way this tax reform will benefit America's farmers and ranchers. Later today, President Trump is delivering the good news at the annual conference of the American Farm Bureau Federation.

Like so many States, Kentucky is home to a vibrant farming community. Throughout the legislative process, I heard family farmers loud and clear. They said: We need tax relief. That is what Congress delivered.

Thanks to our once-in-a-generation tax reform law, it will be easier for

farm families around Kentucky and around the country to invest in new capital equipment and recover their costs. According to the Farm Bureau Federation, 93 percent of U.S. farms file taxes through the individual code. They will benefit from the major tax relief we secured for passthrough businesses.

Especially important for farmers, this tax bill doubled the exemption from the death tax. It is the government's final insult to make grieving families visit both the undertaker and the IRS at the same time. Now this burden will fall on fewer American farmers and ranchers.

Thanks to the work of Senator ROBERTS, Senator HATCH, and many others, we passed a tax reform bill that both the American Farm Bureau Federation and the Kentucky Farm Bureau enthusiastically endorse, and now farming families throughout America will reap the benefits.

NOMINATION OF WILLIAM L. CAMPBELL, JR.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, on another matter, later today the Senate will vote to advance the nomination of William L. Campbell, Jr., to serve as a U.S. district judge for the Middle District of Tennessee.

Mr. Campbell's nomination is not controversial. Like the other three district court nominees before the Senate this week, he is well qualified. They are the kinds of nominees who, until recently, would have sailed quickly and smoothly right through the Senate.

So why will their four nominations consume a week of the Senate's attention? Why do we need to file cloture on each, and then exhaust the full 30 hours of debate? The reason is that Senate Democrats are choosing, for partisan reasons, to make these nominations take as long as possible. Their goal is to waste the Senate's time and prevent the President from promptly filling judicial vacancies.

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



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