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Senate

The Senate met at 10 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 God, we fix our minds on You, the Author and Perfector of our faith. Remind our lawmakers that a Heavenly focus brings joy. Give them the wisdom to see that those who have done the most good in this present world often have thought most about the world to come. May our Senators permit the diligent focus of their hearts on Heaven to preserve the vigor of their work on Earth. May Your Kingdom come, may Your will be done on Earth even as it is done in Heaven.

We pray in Your strong 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.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SASSE). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein, with the time until 12 noon equally divided between the two leaders or their designees.

If no one yields time, the time will be charged equally.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

FUNDING OUR MILITARY

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, we are one day closer to Thursday's government funding deadline. I am pleased to report that our bipartisan talks are continuing to progress toward an agreement on spending caps and important priorities all of us are eager to address. But as we continue the negotiations, we have the opportunity to make real progress with an immediate step that every Senator in the Chamber should support; that is, passing a fiscal year 2018 Defense appropriations bill.

We can vote to remove the uncertainty that is hanging over our Armed Forces and secure the current year funding that our servicemembers deserve. Funding cuts have fallen disproportionately on our men and women in uniform. Current funding levels are not adequate to support Secretary Mattis's new national defense strategy, and our military leaders have made clear that short-term continuing resolutions are hardly the optimal way for Congress to fund our warfighters.

Senators on both sides of the aisle say they agree that our warfighters deserve sufficient, stable funding to fulfill the missions and tasks their country assigns them. Today, each of us will have a chance to back that up with our vote. The Senate will take up a noncontroversial measure that passed the House with a comfortable bipartisan majority. It presents an opportunity for us to unite and give our all-volunteer military a full fiscal year of funding while we finalize our talks on other subjects.

We should seize the opportunity and not delay any longer securing current-year funding for the men and women who bravely keep us safe.

TAX REFORM

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, we have been talking for weeks about the millions of Americans who are already benefiting from tax reform. Already, millions of workers have received a tax reform bonus, pay increase, or other benefit.

I understand that a \$1,000, \$2,000, or \$3,000 bonus might not seem like much to our colleagues from New York or San Francisco. I understand why people who are already very wealthy might agree with my friends the House and Senate Democratic leaders who said these bonuses and benefits are merely "crumbs." But, look, I can assure them that the working families I represent do not see a permanent raise or a multithousand-dollar bonus as a crumb to sweep off the table. In millions of households, thanks to tax reform, paying the bills has already gotten a little less painful and planning for the future has already gotten a little easier. And this is just the beginning.

Soon, millions and millions more Americans will see the impact of tax reform in their paychecks. IRS withholding is going down, take-home pay is going up, and families everywhere will be keeping more of their hard-earned money. This is great news for middle-class Americans. So why are our Democratic friends afraid to acknowledge it? The reason is simple. Every single one of them voted against tax reform.

Every Democrat in the House and in the Senate voted against these new benefits for American workers. Every one of them voted against a pay raise for the 90 percent of American workers who, according to a Treasury Department estimate, are about to see their take-home pay go up. I don't envy their position. I don't envy having to explain why they voted to keep more money in Washington rather than give their constituents a raise.

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



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