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Senate

The Senate met at 11:30 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, how can we serve You today? What do You want us to do for Your Kingdom?

Today, use the lives and labors of our lawmakers to make our Nation and world better. Remind our Senators that although there will be hills and valleys as they strive to accomplish Your purposes, You will always be with them, even until the end of time. Lord, inspire our legislators to know that You have begun a good work in them and will carry it on to completion. Sustain them with Your grace and never let them go.

We pray in Your merciful 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. SULLIVAN). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CHILD PROTECTION IMPROVEMENTS ACT OF 2017

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the House message to accompany H.R. 695, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

House message to accompany H.R. 695, a bill to amend the National Child Protection

Act of 1993 to establish a national criminal history background check system and criminal history review program for certain individuals who, related to their employment, have access to children, the elderly, or individuals with disabilities, and for other purposes.

Pending:

McConnell motion to concur in the amendment of the House to the amendment of the Senate to the bill.

McConnell motion to refer the message of the House on the bill to the Committee on Appropriations, with instructions, McConnell amendment No. 1922, to change the enactment date.

McConnell amendment No. 1923 (to (the instructions) amendment No. 1922), of a perfecting nature.

McConnell amendment No. 1924 (to amendment No. 1923), of a perfecting nature.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico.

RUSSIA INVESTIGATION

Mr. UDALL. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to speak a little bit about the rule of law and President Trump's approach to what has happened as far as the Mueller investigation.

The rule of law has protected our Nation's democracy, institutions, and citizens for over 200 years. It means that no one person is above the law—not even the President.

President Trump does not seem to respect the rule of law. He acts as if the law doesn't apply to him. He believes that he can steer the wheels of justice in whichever direction he wants to shield himself from lawful investigation.

This President is willing to risk national security, to defy the judgment of the FBI Director and his team, and to release classified material for his own political purposes. Think about that. The President of the United States just declassified a top-secret document, and he did it with the clear intent to undermine the investigation into Russian interference in our election. His actions should end any doubt about his willingness to obstruct justice.

After he declassified the Nunes memo, President Trump said: "A lot of people should be ashamed of themselves. It's a disgrace, what's happened in our country." This is one of the rare times I have agreed with President Trump. It is a disgrace, what has happened in our country, but not for the reasons the President gives.

Russia's cyber attacks and other potential operations during the 2016 election represented a direct strike at our democracy. I cannot think of a time when our national interest has been so threatened and the President of the United States has ignored the threat. Not only has this President turned a blind eye to Russia's interference, but he has done nothing to prevent future attacks. He ignores the threat even though the CIA Director says Russia will try to interfere in our elections again. Instead, he has done everything he can to curry favor with Vladimir Putin. He should be ashamed of himself.

Unfortunately, he has demonstrated time and time again that he is incapable of shame. But he is not alone. Many members of his party should be ashamed for enabling the President to undermine the special counsel investigation, for enabling his defamation of career public servants, and for remaining silent in the face of a growing crisis.

The President has made clear that he does not like Special Counsel Mueller's and Deputy Attorney General Rosenstein's independence and commitment to the rule of law, and he has had an eye on getting rid of them for quite a while. We learned he considered firing them last June, and we have known for many months, from the President's own admission, that he fired FBI Director James Comey to stop the Russia investigation. These men have dedicated their lives to serving our country. Mr. Mueller served as a Federal prosecutor and a Department of Justice lawyer for much of his career, and he was appointed as FBI Director in 2001 by

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



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