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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable THOM TILLIS, a Senator from the State of North Carolina.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Almighty God, the fountain of wisdom, thank You for this season of penance and personal reflection. Lord, as we remember that the last time Ash Wednesday and Valentine's Day fell on the same day—it was 1945—we thank You for the many challenging seasons through which You have brought this Nation and world. As we continue to depend upon the power of Your prevailing providence, deliver us from majoring in minors. Bless our lawmakers. As they commit themselves to You, make them a voice for the voiceless and a help for the helpless. May they make it their first priority to fulfill Your purposes for their lives.

We pray in Your sacred 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, February 14, 2018.

To the Senate:

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

appoint the Honorable THOM TILLIS, a Senator from the State of North Carolina, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ORRIN G. HATCH,
President pro tempore.

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

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

IMMIGRATION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, it is now Wednesday morning of the week the Senate set aside to debate DACA, border security, interior enforcement, and other immigration issues. I promised I would clear the way to debate these matters this week, and I have. I promised I would ensure a fair amendment process in which both sides could offer legislation for discussion and votes, and I have. Just yesterday, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus released a letter thanking me for keeping my commitment and urged the Senate to resolve this issue quickly.

But we haven't even been able to get started yet. We haven't even been able to get started. Yesterday, I tried twice to open the debate and start the voting. Both times, my Democratic colleagues objected. I am a little perplexed, frankly, by the holdup.

My Democratic colleagues have spent months—months, as we all know—demanding that the Senate take up this issue. They even shut down the government—shut down the government unnecessarily, I might add—in order to secure this very week for this discus-

sion. But now that the time has come to make law instead of just making points, they are stalling. Why? Why, after months and months spent demanding that the Senate take up this issue, do they now object to even starting the debate? Because they know, no matter how long they spend in closed-door negotiations, they can't change the fact that the President has spelled out a fair and generous framework that will be necessary to earn his signature. These guys can't take yes for an answer. So instead of moving to fulfill our promises and address the DACA issue, they haven't even allowed the debate to begin.

There is a widespread desire in this Chamber to find a resolution for the illegal immigrants who were brought to this country as children—widespread agreement on that—but common sense dictates that we cannot simply treat one symptom of our broken immigration policy in complete isolation. We must address the underlying problems as well. That means fixing broken parts of our legal immigration system.

We must also ensure the safety of the American people. That is why a DACA resolution should be paired with new security measures at our borders and commonsense steps to improve security inside our borders, steps like fixing the loophole that forces us to release thousands of criminal aliens whose home countries won't take them back, steps like enacting Kate's Law to put criminal offenders who repeatedly and illegally cross our borders behind bars, cracking down with stiffer penalties for human trafficking, and updating the removability grounds for drug traffickers, repeat drunk drivers, gang members, sex offenders, and other violent and dangerous criminals. Why in the world would those ideas be controversial?

Keeping Americans safe does not need to be a partisan issue, and addressing these important safety issues along with DACA, border security, and

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



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