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Senate

The Senate met at 11 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.

Immortal, invisible, God only wise, we praise You that those who trust in You will not lack any good things. We thank You that You are the source of our strength and the strength of our lives.

Guide our lawmakers in all their undertakings. Stay close to them and infuse them with Your Spirit of Wisdom. May they strive for Your approval instead of seeking the approbation of humanity. When our Senators face troubles, rescue them from each one, enabling them to tell of Your excellent greatness. Lord, give them the grace to receive things as they are, while resolving by Your grace to make them what they ought to be.

And, Lord, we pray for the victims and families of the Great Mills school shooting.

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.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SULLIVAN). The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I would like this morning to give an up-

date to my colleagues, given the challenges associated with the weather—and also as we move toward a conclusion of the omnibus.

I have spoken to the Democratic leader. It is my expectation that we will move forward with votes today. We are hoping to move them forward on the sex trafficking bill, moving them up in the day, hopefully, to accommodate safe travel. So we will notify everyone when votes are scheduled.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

ALLOW STATES AND VICTIMS TO FIGHT ONLINE SEX TRAFFICKING ACT OF 2017

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to the consideration of H.R. 1865, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 1865) to amend the Communications Act of 1934 to clarify that section 230 of such Act does not prohibit the enforcement against providers and users of interactive computer services of Federal and State criminal and civil law relating to sexual exploitation of children or sex trafficking, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to enter into a colloquy on this legislation with some of my leadership colleagues who are present: first, Senator JOHN THUNE, the chair of the Commerce Committee, who has been very involved in this issue; Senator RICHARD BLUMENTHAL as well, who is the coauthor of the legislation and cochair of the trafficking caucus; Senator CLAIRE McCASKILL, who is ranking member of the Subcommittee on Investigations; and Senator HEIDI HETKAMP, one of the original cosponsors of this legislation.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I am pleased to be joined by my colleagues this morning in this Chamber as we begin the process of debating the amendments that are being offered and moving toward a final vote on this important legislation to deal with sex trafficking which, unbelievably, in this century and in this country is actually increasing. All of the experts say it is increasing because of the presence of these organizations online that are using the ruthless efficiency of the internet to sell women and children.

It is fitting that this group is bipartisan, because this process has been bipartisan in coming up with this legislation all along. It is really the culmination of 2 years' worth of work—a lot of great work and investigations being done by the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, as well as good work being done by the Commerce Committee through regular order. We would not be on the verge of sending this bill to the President's desk without the hard work of every Senator who will be on the floor this morning.

I would also like to briefly recognize a sixth member of our group who cannot be here but whose passion about this issue means that although his presence is not here, it is felt; and that

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



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