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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.

O God and Father of humanity, guide our lawmakers with Your Spirit of truth and love. During days of difficulty, help them to remember that You will never leave or forsake them. Lord, provide them with the wisdom, courage, and patience to do what is best for our Nation and world. Give us all grace to maintain our faith and freedom with righteousness, fostering peace and good will for the glory of Your Name. Hasten, Lord, that perfect day, when pain and death shall cease and Your just rule shall fill the Earth with health, light, and peace.

We pray in Your great 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.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will pro-

ceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Claria Horn Boom, of Kentucky, to be Eastern States District Judge for the United States District Districts of Kentucky and Western Districts of Kentucky.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, this week, as I stated yesterday, the Senate will focus on personnel business.

Six well-qualified nominees are currently before the Senate. They are awaiting the full consideration they clearly deserve. Their nominations have been vetted. Their expertise is well known. Their positions sit empty, waiting to be filled. The American people are waiting for their President to have his full team and for their Federal Government to be appropriately staffed.

If last evening's vote to advance Claria Horn Boom's district court nomination were any indication, we would be in for a productive week. Ninety-six of our colleagues voted in support—96. With such broad bipartisan support, you might think that filing cloture should not have been necessary in the first place.

With nominees as uncontroversial as these, you might think the Senate would roll quickly through them and move on to other business, but unfortunately, for more than a year now, our Democratic friends have used the partisan playbook to delay and obstruct even the least controversial nominees. So unless we can reach the kind of bipartisan agreement that was once the norm around here and process non-controversial nominees more promptly, we are left with no choice but to proceed the hard way, and that is just what we have done.

Facing historic obstruction, Republicans have confirmed ambitious reformists to crucial posts where fresh

ideas were long overdue, and we have confirmed top-notch legal minds to the Federal bench, including a record number of circuit court judges for a President's first year and the generational choice of Justice Neil Gorsuch, who was confirmed to the Supreme Court 1 year ago today.

I have already stated that the Senate will remain in session as long as it takes to clear this slate of nominees. Following the confirmation of Ms. Boom, we will move to consideration of John Ring to serve on the National Labor Relations Board. After Mr. Ring comes nominees to the Department of Labor, the EPA, and two more nominees to fill district court vacancies—all vetted, all qualified, all sitting right here in the Senate. In at least one case, several of my Democratic friends have already proactively announced support for the nominee. So let's get back on track together. Let's consider and confirm these nominees without delay.

TAX REFORM

Mr. President, on a further matter, something exciting has started to happen all across our country. In America's small towns and suburbs, Main Street businesses are dusting off "Help Wanted" signs. In our small cities, American manufacturers are expanding facilities and creating new products. In rural America, family farmers are investing in new equipment and looking forward to increased prosperity.

For years, all of these parts of our great Nation were more or less forgotten. Millions and millions of Americans were left behind. Whether by accident or by design, the Obama administration's economic policies brought some prosperity to America's biggest and richest urban areas, but our small towns, our suburbs, our smaller cities, and our rural areas and farming communities year after year saw next to no progress. This is the disparity that President Trump and this Republican Congress were elected to change.

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



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