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Senate

The Senate met at 10:30 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.

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on us today. You are a God of might and power, and our times are in Your hands. Forgive us for sometimes forgetting to trust Your prevailing providence, as You increase our faith through the power of Your Holy Word.

Lord, thank You for our lawmakers. Remind them that they are appointed by You and are, therefore, accountable to You for their work. May they not forget that they are servants of Your Kingdom as You motivate them to be faithful in what they think, say, and do. Provide them with Your wisdom, empowering them to fulfill Your purposes for their lives.

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. COTTON). The majority leader is recognized.

SPEAKER RYAN'S RETIREMENT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, this morning, Speaker RYAN announced to his colleagues that he will be departing the House at the conclusion of the 115th Congress.

Two and a half years ago, PAUL RYAN was drafted by his colleagues to lead

the House through a new era. Like a true leader, PAUL stepped up to the plate. He answered his colleagues' call with exactly the earnest, selfless, and focused approach that has defined his entire career in Congress. The results have been beyond impressive.

Capping off a remarkable 20-year career in Congress, PAUL's speakership has yielded one significant accomplishment after another for his conference, his constituents in Wisconsin's First Congressional District, as well as the American people.

True to his career-long reputation as a champion for pro-growth economics, PAUL helped lead the way on last year's once-in-a-generation rewrite of the Nation's Tax Code. Thanks in large part to his personal passion and expertise, reform became a reality, and our economy is charting a new course toward greater prosperity and greater opportunity.

On its own, this generational accomplishment would secure the Speaker's legacy as a transformational conservative leader, but, of course, it is far from the only fruit of his speakership. His leadership was vital to securing everything from the largest year-on-year increase in defense funding in 15 years to the remaking of the way we treat and find cures for rare diseases. What is more, PAUL has paired that ambitious agenda with infectious good cheer and an unflagging commitment to serve all Americans. Amidst all the stresses and pressures of leadership, PAUL's optimism and energy never waned.

It has been a sincere pleasure and a real inspiration to work alongside this humble servant and happy warrior. I am glad we can count on his continued leadership through the rest of this year because our work together is far from finished. I look forward to collaborating closely these next months to implement more of the inclusive, pro-growth, pro-opportunity agenda the American people are counting on us to keep advancing.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, now on another matter, yesterday the Senate confirmed the first of six nominees slated for consideration this week, Claria Horn Boom to serve as district judge for the Eastern and Western Districts of Kentucky. She was confirmed 96 to 1. There was just one Senator in opposition.

This is the kind of uncontroversial nomination the Senate could typically dispatch by a voice vote, but not these days. Over and over again, we have had to file cloture and exhaust floor time on amply qualified nominees who then soar through their confirmation votes by lopsided margins.

Since President Trump took office, the Senate has had to hold 82—82—cloture votes on judicial and executive nominations. In the first 2 years of President Obama's administration, there were only 12 such cloture votes—12 for President Obama, 4 for George W. Bush, 8 for President Clinton, and already, just a few months into President Trump's second year, there have been 82. The numbers speak for themselves.

Today we will have the opportunity to confirm yet another qualified nominee for a critical post. John Ring's nomination to serve on the National Labor Relations Board is an important next step to continue cleaning years of regulatory rust off of the American economy. It is a natural addition to the progress we have made scaling back unhelpful regulations that make it harder for American businesses to create jobs and make opportunities for American workers more scarce.

Mr. Ring's confirmation will give the country a fully staffed NLRB once again and turn the page on the previous administration's efforts to remake this bipartisan Board into a one-sided political weapon. Even in a short amount of time last year, we saw just how much good a fully functioning NLRB can do for American workers when it calls balls and strikes fairly instead of bending over backward to

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



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