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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable CINDY HYDE-SMITH, a Senator from the State of Mississippi.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

God of wisdom and order, who filled the universe with mysteries of Your power, restore us to the image of Your glory. Create in us clean hearts, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Lord, we thank You for Your life-giving Spirit flowing through us to reinforce our faith, hope, and love.

Inspire our Senators. Give them truth in their innermost being, a sense of dedication in their work, and a spirit of cooperation that they may labor together for the good of this land we love. May they strive to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with You.

We pray in Your great 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).

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, April 19, 2018.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable CINDY HYDE-SMITH, a

Senator from the State of Mississippi, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ORRIN G. HATCH,
President pro tempore.

Mrs. HYDE-SMITH thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

PROTECTING MOMS AND INFANTS ACT

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, we all know the grief the opioid crisis produces: broken families, stolen opportunity, lost loved ones. This epidemic has been especially severe in my home State of Kentucky, claiming lives at a record pace.

In light of this urgent problem, I am proud Congress is fighting back. We have passed substantial bipartisan legislation to give communities the resources they need. The most recent government funding bill provided billions of dollars of additional support. But the work to end the suffering continues.

One of the most heartbreaking facts is the skyrocketing number of infants who are born dependent on opioids. Defenseless children start their lives suffering from addiction. That is why in 2015 I sponsored, along with Senator CASEY, the bipartisan Protecting Our Infants Act. As the first law to specifically address prenatal opioid exposure, it directed the Secretary of Health and Human Services to review the subject of opioid abuse in prenatal and infant patients. Our bill tasked the Secretary with developing strategies to fill the gap in opioid research and programming and provide recommendations for preventing further harm to expecting mothers and newborns.

Now it is time to build on our success and better protect vulnerable children, so today I will introduce the Protecting Moms and Infants Act. This legislation directs the Secretary of HHS to report on the implementation of the strategies developed in the previous bill. It would have the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention develop educational materials to better inform doctors and expecting mothers about opioid alternatives. It authorizes increased funding for competitive Federal grants to help organizations address this particular part of the opioid crisis. This bill continues our years-long efforts to protect the most vulnerable.

I thank Senator CASEY and my colleague from Kentucky, Congressman BRETT GUTHRIE, who is sponsoring companion legislation in the House.

Medical professionals, law enforcement officials, and many across Kentucky are working every day to bring an end to the misery of the opioid epidemic. This legislation will continue that fight, and I urge my colleagues to support it.

NOMINATION OF JAMES BRIDENSTINE

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, yesterday we voted to advance JIM BRIDENSTINE's nomination to lead the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

JIM is a decorated pilot and combat veteran. His tenure in the House of Representatives testifies to his understanding of the issues facing today's space program and to his advocacy of NASA modernization. But, as is often the case, this well-qualified nominee has waited too long for a vote. NASA has been led by an Acting Administrator for a record 15 months. So I hope my colleagues will join me in voting to confirm JIM BRIDENSTINE today.

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



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