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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.

God of hope and love, through all the length of changing years, Your goodness never fails. Help us to know that to embrace Your counsel is the way to find the road to abundant life. Sustain our Senators. Empower them to walk blamelessly and honor You by doing what is right.

Lord, prosper the works of their hands, and use them to help our Nation and world reflect the greatness of Your Kingdom. May their mouths speak wisdom and their hearts possess a knowledge of Your holiness, as You sanctify them through Your truth.

We pray in Your Holy 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 (Mrs. HYDE-SMITH). The majority leader is recognized.

RELEASE OF AMERICAN PRISONERS IN NORTH KOREA AND NOMINATION OF GINA HASPEL

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, let me begin this morning with gratitude to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. Overnight, he completed a sensitive diplomatic mission and returned home from North Korea with

three freed American prisoners. The families of these three men, and the entire country, are so grateful.

This episode offers just one more example of the complex, relentless foreign policy challenges that confront our country. Clearly, America was fortunate that our new Secretary of State was prepared to execute his responsibilities from day one. Leadership and expertise matter.

Yesterday, our colleagues on the Intelligence Committee heard from another well-prepared leader, Gina Haspel—President Trump's selection to head the Central Intelligence Agency. Ms. Haspel's testimony showcased the judgment and poise that have defined her 33-year career of selfless service with the Agency. Her testimony confirmed what her gold standard resume and her bipartisan support from seasoned national security leaders had actually already told us: Gina Haspel has the experience, the talent, and the unique skill set to excel in this important job at this important moment.

Since 1985, she served the Nation in clandestine operations around the globe and rose to the highest levels of Agency leadership. True to the best traditions of intelligence professionals, numerous former Directors have lauded her qualifications, notwithstanding whether their service was for Democratic or Republican administrations. Her nomination carries the full-throated endorsement of 53 of our Nation's most respected national security leaders.

Today, more than ever, the value of Ms. Haspel's insights and experiences cannot be understated. Her career has encompassed both the Cold War and the ongoing Global War on Terror. In a moment when our national security demands excellence in each of these areas—great power competition and counterterrorism alike—Ms. Haspel stands uniquely ready to assume the responsibilities of CIA Director as perhaps its most qualified candidate in the

Agency's history. As the Intelligence Committee continues its consideration, I strongly urge my colleagues to support this fine nominee. We will all sleep better at night knowing Gina Haspel is on the job.

JUDICIAL NOMINATIONS

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, on another matter, today the Senate continues our work to confirm President Trump's well-qualified judicial nominees. Yesterday, we confirmed Kurt Engelhardt to the Fifth Circuit by a significant bipartisan margin.

The nominee now before us, Michael Brennan, is similarly qualified. His nomination carries bipartisan support from the people who know him best, including the endorsement of more than 30 current and former peers in Wisconsin. In the words of one such colleague, Mr. Brennan possesses "the mind, heart, and soul of a great jurist." It is not too surprising, then, that the American Bar Association has awarded Mr. Brennan its highest rating, unanimously—unanimously—"well-qualified."

I look forward to voting to confirm Mr. Brennan later today. Later, we will be voting to advance two more circuit court nominees: Joel Carson and John Nalbandian. Each possesses their own set of sterling qualifications, each comes recommended widely by those who have worked closely with them, and each deserves to be confirmed by this body and take their place on the Federal bench.

Our friends across the aisle aren't making it easy, but despite the historic obstruction, this Senate will continue to do what it takes to process and confirm the President's fine nominees for these important posts.

TAX REFORM

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, on one final matter, later today, President Trump is visiting the great State

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



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