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Senate

The Senate met at 3 p.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.

Almighty God, who fills us with hope even in challenging times, use us to bring Your Kingdom to Earth.

Give to our lawmakers the inner strength to seek the truth and live by Your precepts. Help them to see eternal things amid the tempests of the temporal. Use them to help create a more nonviolent nation and world. Free them from towering self-sufficiency as they habitually place their hope in You. Lord, make them tall enough in moral and spiritual stature to rise above the petty prejudices of our day, depending on You to direct their steps.

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 (Mr. YOUNG). The majority leader is recognized.

SANTA FE HIGH SCHOOL SHOOTING

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, the Nation watched in horror Friday as a senseless act of violence changed a community forever. The Senate and all Americans stand in mourning, sorrow, and sympathy with the students, fac-

ulty, staff, and families of Santa Fe High School in Texas.

No community should ever be subjected to such horror and heartbreak. Our hearts go out to the families of those killed, to the wounded who continue to battle injuries, to the first responders who leapt into action, and to the Santa Fe community that rallies around them.

VA MISSION ACT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, on an entirely different matter, in the coming days, the Senate will take up landmark legislation on one of our top priorities: providing more options and better care to America's veterans.

The VA MISSION Act is a major milestone in an ongoing effort by Chairman ISAKSON and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs to ensure that our Nation fulfills its promises to our men and women in uniform, including more than 300,000 veterans in my home State of Kentucky.

What Senator ISAKSON and his colleagues have put together is one of the most comprehensive reform packages for veterans' healthcare since the VA was created in 1930. It builds on the substantial success of the Veterans Choice Act and harnesses provisions of 15 different Senate-introduced bills. This bill streamlines support systems, expands access to care, and provides new tools for attracting and retraining top caregivers.

The veteran who lives far from a VA facility but needs frequent followup care will now have easier access to local providers and walk-in clinics. The wounded warrior navigating difficult pain management routines will now be served by providers with clearer guidelines for opioid prescriptions. The retired servicemember who relies on a family caregiver will rest assured of expanded eligibility and program benefits for veterans of all eras.

It is hardly surprising that this bill has such a broad bipartisan coalition of

support, including the endorsement of 38 of the Nation's leading veterans advocacy organizations. I look forward enthusiastically to considering it in the coming days.

I urge every one of my colleagues to support this legislation and send it to the President for his signature. It is not merely our duty but our privilege to improve and enhance the care available to those who have given so much.

NOMINATION OF DANA BAIOTTO

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, on another matter, later today we will consider the nomination of Dana Baiotto, the President's choice to join the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

Ms. Baiotto's résumé speaks for itself. After receiving her J.D. cum laude from Duquesne University, she clerked in the Western District of Pennsylvania before launching an impressive career in private practice.

For two decades she has stood at the center of complicated cases and gained national recognition for her mastery of the legal questions surrounding consumer safety. This experience makes Ms. Baiotto an ideal candidate to help the CPSC protect consumers effectively and efficiently without imposing unnecessary barriers to free enterprise.

Testifying before our colleagues on the Commerce Committee, she pledged to seek that balance with "transparency" and an "open door policy" and to remain "guided by the rule of law."

I look forward to advancing this qualified nominee when we vote this afternoon and urge all of my colleagues to join me.

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



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