

from addiction. We will support caregivers, and we will drive innovation and long-term solutions. It is a powerful first step as we continue, with our friends in Mexico, to work together hand in hand to fight this terrible scourge.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LEE). Without objection, it is so ordered.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the en bloc consideration of the following nominations: Executive Calendar Nos. 766 and 868.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report the nominations.

The bill clerk read the nominations of John E. Whitley, of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Army and Charles P. Verdon, of California, to be Deputy Administrator for Defense Programs, National Nuclear Security Administration.

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the nominations en bloc.

Mr. McCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the Senate vote on the nominations en bloc with no intervening action or debate; that if confirmed, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table en bloc; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; that no further motions be in order; and that any statements relating to the nominations be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Whitley and Verdon nominations en bloc?

The nominations were confirmed.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session for a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

BIPARTISANSHIP

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, for more than four decades, I have had the dis-

tinct privilege of serving in the U.S. Senate, what some have called the world's greatest deliberative body. Speaking on the Senate floor, debating legislation in committee, corralling the support of my colleagues on compromise legislation—these are the moments I will miss. These are the memories I will cherish forever.

To address this body is to experience a singular feeling, a sense that you are a part of something bigger than yourself, a minor character in the grand narrative that is America.

No matter how often I come to speak at this lectern, I experience that feeling, again and again, but today, if I am being honest, I also feel sadness. Indeed, my heart is heavy. It aches for the times when we actually lived up to our reputation as the world's greatest deliberative body. It longs for the days in which Democrats and Republicans would meet on middle ground rather than retreat to their partisan trenches.

Now, some may say I am waxing nostalgic, yearning—as old men often do—for some golden age that never existed. They would be wrong.

The Senate I have described is not some fairytale but the reality we once knew. Having served as a Senator for nearly 42 years, I can tell you this: Things weren't always as they are now.

I was here when this body was at its best. I was here when regular order was the norm, when legislation was debated in committee, and when members worked constructively with one another for the good of the country. I was here when we could say, without any hint of irony, that we were Members of the world's greatest deliberative body.

Times have certainly changed.

Over the last several years, I have witnessed the subversion of Senate rules, the abandonment of regular order, and the full-scale deterioration of the judicial confirmation process. Polarization has ossified. Gridlock is the new norm. Like the humidity here, partisanship permeates everything we do.

On both the left and the right, the bar of decency has been set so low that jumping over it is no longer the objective. Limbo is the new name of the game. How low can you go? The answer, it seems, is always lower.

All the evidence points to an unsettling truth: The Senate, as an institution, is in crisis. The committee process lies in shambles. Regular order is a relic of the past. Compromise—once the guiding credo of this great institution—is now synonymous with surrender.

Since I first came to the Senate in 1978, the culture of this place has shifted fundamentally and not for the better. Here, there used to be a level of congeniality and kinship among colleagues that was hard to find anywhere else. In those days, I counted Democrats among my very best friends. One moment, we would be locking horns on the Senate floor; the next, we would be breaking bread together over family dinner.

My unlikely friendship with the late Senator Kennedy embodied the spirit of goodwill and collegiality that used to thrive here. Teddy and I were a case study in contradictions. He was a dyed-in-the-wool Democrat; I was a resolute Republican. But by choosing friendship over party loyalty, we were able to pass some of the most significant bipartisan achievements of modern times, from the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Religious Freedom Restoration Act to the Ryan White bill and the State Children's Health Insurance Program.

Nine years after Teddy's passing, it is worth asking: Could a relationship like this even exist in today's Senate? Could two people with polar opposite beliefs and from vastly different walks of life come together as often as Teddy and I did for the good of the country? Or are we too busy vilifying each other to even consider friendship with the other side?

Many factors contribute to the current dysfunction, but if I were to identify the root of our crisis, it would be this: the loss of comity and genuine good feeling among Senate colleagues.

Comity is the cartilage of the Senate, the soft connective tissue that cushions impact between opposing joints, but in recent years, that cartilage has been ground to a nub. All movement has become bone on bone. Our ideas grate against each other with increasing frequency and with nothing to absorb the friction. We hobble to get any bipartisan legislation to the Senate floor, much less to the President's desk. The pain is excruciating, and it is felt by the entire Nation.

We must remember that our dysfunction is not confined to the Capitol. It ripples far beyond these walls, to every State, to every town, and to every street corner in America.

The Senate sets the tone of American civic life. We don't mirror the political culture as much as we make it. It is incumbent on us, then, to move the culture in a positive direction, keeping in mind that everything we do here has a trickle-down effect. If we are divided, then the Nation is divided. If we abandon civility, then our constituents will follow.

To mend the Nation, we must first mend the Senate. We must restore the culture of comity, compromise, and mutual respect that used to exist here. Both in our personal and public conduct, we must be the very change we want to see in the country. We must not be enemies but friends.

"Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory will swell when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature."

These are not my words but the words of President Abraham Lincoln. They come from a heartfelt plea he made to the American people long ago on the eve of the Civil War. Lincoln's admonition is just as timely today as