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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable RAND PAUL, a Senator from the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Gracious God, we praise You today for Your love that sustains our earthly journey. When evil flourishes, we keep our eyes on You, trusting always in the unfolding of Your powerful providence.

Today, inspire our lawmakers to discover the fulfillment of resting in the assurance of Your amazing grace. As our Senators remember how You have provided for this Nation in the past, may they develop a stronger faith in the protection You will give us in the future. Guide them into the future surrounded by the shield of Your favor. Lord, keep them close to You and to each other as they fulfill their sacred calling as legislators.

We pray in Your sacred 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).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, November 28, 2018.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby

appoint the Honorable RAND PAUL, a Senator from the Commonwealth of Kentucky, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ORRIN G. HATCH,
President pro tempore.

Mr. PAUL thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

SENATE BRIEFING

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, for the information of all Senators, key members of the administration will be coming to the Senate at 11 a.m. this morning for an all-Members briefing with respect to Yemen and Saudi Arabia.

Senators on both sides of the aisle have legitimate concerns about the war in Yemen, the terrible humanitarian plight of Yemeni citizens caught in the crossfire, and the multiple U.S. interests wrapped up in this conflict.

The U.S.-Saudi relationship is a longstanding and critical one, but Senators on both sides of the aisle also have legitimate concerns about the recent conduct of the Saudi Government. All of us want to see our critical foreign partners behave responsibly. I have been encouraged to hear both Secretary Mattis and Secretary Pompeo call for an end to the war in Yemen and for accountability following the murder of Jamal Khashoggi. So I look forward to hearing from both Secretaries today and learning more about the administration's strategy to achieve these and other important objectives.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, there is a lot more work to do. That has been our message after returning

from the Thanksgiving holiday. The Senate is staying focused on wrapping up this year's remaining priorities: getting more of the President's team in place, confirming well-qualified nominees to our Federal courts, and attending to the pressing legislative business the American people need and expect us to handle.

Yesterday, the nomination of Stephen Vaden to serve as general counsel at the Department of Agriculture was confirmed with bipartisan support, and the motion to advance the nomination of Karen Kelley for Deputy Secretary of Commerce was cleared by an even wider margin.

But these important steps haven't always come easily. As I mentioned yesterday, between the day the Vaden nomination was favorably reported by our colleagues on the Agriculture Committee and yesterday's confirmation vote, 351 days elapsed—351 days on the Executive Calendar.

These stories are similar for so many of the President's well-qualified nominees: Needless delays, a recordbreaking number of cloture votes, and then many go on to clear this Chamber with bipartisan support. In some cases that support is nearly unanimous, but my Democratic colleagues made this body drag its feet regardless.

We will press on and continue this week to make progress and put to rest the various outstanding items that have to be completed before the end of the 115th Congress.

Today, the Senate will vote to confirm Karen Kelley to serve as Deputy Secretary of Commerce. By any metric, Ms. Kelley has the experience and economic acumen to continue a record of outstanding service in that role—a record she has already begun by serving capably in her acting capacity since last year. I hope each of my colleagues will join me in voting to confirm her.

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



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