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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable DEAN HELLER, a Senator from the State of Nevada.

PRAYER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Today's opening prayer will be offered by Dr. Tommy Middleton, director of the Baptist Association of Greater Baton Rouge, from Baton Rouge, LA.

The guest Chaplain offered the following prayer:

Good morning. Let's pray.

Father, we are grateful for this life and health and strength that You have given us so that we may serve You and serve others, so thankful for Your hand of blessing and favor that is rested upon this Nation. And, O God, may that continue.

So, Lord, we pray for these Senators, that, Lord, You would give them wisdom in the decisions they make and the crafting of legislation; Lord, that You would give them compassion as they deal with others—fellow Senators, legislators, elected officials, constituents; and that You would give them courage to make decisions based upon truth. Although there might be opposition, Lord, may they stay people of truth. Father, I do pray that You give them discernment so that in the deliberations they make, they will judge a righteous judgment.

Finally, O Lord, that we would walk in humility, realizing that the decisions we make, the course of our walk, our actions in our lives will be judged by those who have elected us here, but more than that, we will be judged by You, Almighty God.

Lord, we pray, we desire, we seek Your help, and, as Your Word says, our help is in the Name of the Lord, the maker of Heaven and Earth, and in that Name, the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I pray. 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, December 6, 2018.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable DEAN HELLER, a Senator from the State of Nevada, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ORRIN G. HATCH,
President pro tempore.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Louisiana.

WELCOMING DR. TOMMY MIDDLETON

Mr. CASSIDY. Mr. President, I rise today to speak to my friend, Dr. Tommy Middleton, the executive director of the Baptist Association of Greater Baton Rouge, who just opened us in prayer.

Dr. Middleton oversees 100 churches and missions, which include services in 6 languages—Chinese, Burmese, Vietnamese, Filipino, Korean, and Spanish. I should say seven—also English. The ministries include the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary Extension in Baton Rouge; student work at the Baptist Collegiate Ministries of Louisiana State University and Southern University; camp ministries at the

Judson Baptist Retreat Center; prison ministries in four State prisons and six local parish jails; governmental interface on the local, State, and Federal levels; ministry to the seamen through the Seafarers Ministries; church planting regionally; and international missions in 16 different countries in which he has been personally involved. I will add one more: bringing relief to victims of natural disasters across our country.

Overall, Dr. Middleton has spread the good news of the Gospel for nearly 50 years. It was my honor to invite Dr. Middleton to open the U.S. Senate in prayer this morning. We have all been blessed.

I yield back.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

THANKING STAFF

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I have a number of important topics to discuss this morning, but first and foremost, I want to personally thank everyone in this building who gave so much of their own time and energy to facilitate the rituals that filled this Capitol for the last several days.

From the moment that news of President Bush's passing was made public, intricate plans were set in motion in both the House and Senate to arrange a public tribute worthy of a national treasure and a rare patriot like George Bush. Needless to say, the entire congressional family should be proud of the result.

As our 41st President lay in state earlier this week, the Bush family, world leaders, and tens of thousands of Americans were welcomed to the Capitol to pay their respects. I know my colleagues will join me in thanking the

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



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great many people who helped make such a beautiful remembrance possible: to the staff of the Architect of the Capitol, all the offices under the Sergeant at Arms, the Secretary of the Senate and her team, and the Press Gallery; to the volunteers from my own staff and from other congressional offices who freely gave their time; to the staff of the Capitol Visitor Center who ensured that tens of thousands of people could share this experience; to the men and women of the Capitol Police who watch over us all; to the U.S. military, the envy of the world. Special thanks to Stef Muchow, my director of operations, who played such a tireless role in conducting this orchestra, going back through the entire weekend leading up to Monday, and to so many others who worked through the weekend and around the clock to help the legislative branch coordinate a dignified sendoff befitting this remarkable man whom we honor. I thank you, and the Nation thanks you.

NOMINATIONS OF BERNARD L. MCNAMEE AND KATHLEEN LAURA KRANINGER

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, on an entirely different matter, the Senate voted yesterday to advance the nomination of Bernard McNamee to serve on the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. Today, we will vote on his confirmation. I encourage every one of my colleagues to join me in supporting this abundantly well-qualified nominee.

After Mr. McNamee, we will continue moving ahead with the personnel business. We will vote on the confirmation of Kathleen Kraninger to lead the Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection. Ms. Kraninger brings a wealth of experience to an Agency in need of a renewed, consumer-focused mission. I urge each of my colleagues to join me in voting to get her started in this important work.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, on another matter, for 8 years, President Obama landed blow after blow in his War on Coal. As we all know, it wasn't just the coal companies that endured the pain; hard-working families—many who live in economically distressed communities that relied on mining jobs—became the casualties of this ideological agenda. In my State of Kentucky, for example, those policies inflicted serious damage that is still being felt years later.

That is why I was so grateful to hear that later today, the Trump administration will begin the process to undo and replace another Obama anti-coal regulation. Throughout the Obama administration, my Republican colleagues and I did everything we could to stop this assault on vulnerable communities. Where this particular rule is

concerned, I personally led the charge, including as the lead sponsor of a resolution to cancel it altogether.

Republicans knew these policies would stymie American competitiveness and do little to actually help the environment. Despite our best efforts, President Obama's EPA worked overtime to shutter existing coal plants and, with this rule in particular, stop new ones from being built. It was the fulfillment of one of his most troubling campaign promises, which many of us in coal country remember very well. Here is what he said:

If somebody wants to build a coal-fired power plant, they can. It's just that it will bankrupt them.

When we blocked the legislation he originally pitched, President Obama chose to go it alone and try to implement aggressive regulations, often bending the rule of law in the process. When we used the tools available to us to bring relief to American families, we were met each time with vetoes. But everything changed when the American people elected President Trump. We have worked hand in hand to end the War on Coal and to bring relief.

Earlier this year, the President unveiled his plan to dismantle the so-called Clean Power Plan, a policy designed to shut down nearly every active coal plant. Now President Trump's EPA is also targeting another regulation that would have made it nearly impossible to build any new plants in the future. This is a crucial step toward undoing the damage and putting coal back on a level playing field.

On behalf of coal families throughout Kentucky, I applaud the Trump administration. This runaway regulation needs to be rolled back and replaced with a more reasonable and achievable set of standards. Coal deserves a level playing field, and that is what this White House is trying to accomplish. I look forward to reviewing the proposal in the coming days and continuing to work with President Trump on this critical issue.

TRIBUTE TO BOB CORKER

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, this is that time at the end of a Congress when inevitably some of our Members go on to something else and leave this body. I want to take this opportunity this morning to pay tribute to another distinguished Member of the Senate who is leaving us at the end of this year.

Senator BOB CORKER is one of the most hard-working and, frankly, relentless Members of this body. He is a builder by trade and a fixer by nature. Senator CORKER is always a man on a mission. Our distinguished colleague hails from a State with a long history of impressive Senators. Tennesseans such as Howard Baker, Al Gore, Bill Frist, and, of course, our colleague LAMAR ALEXANDER all developed national reputations as leaders. But after 12 years of working with Bob, I could

not feel more comfortable saying that he himself will now become a part of that great Tennessee legacy. He has met that high bar, and he set it high himself.

No sooner could any Senator turn his or her attention to some important but stalled initiative—some dead-end negotiation, some thorny national problem—then you would see BOB CORKER diving into the fray and attacking the problem with everything he had.

The limitless work ethic, the entrepreneurial drive—these things have defined BOB CORKER since long before he was sworn in as a Senator. He started working odd jobs at age 13. At 25, he had saved up enough money to cofound his own construction company—25 years old—and strike out for himself. That firm grew from an \$8,000 lark into a major operation that spanned more than a dozen States.

Bob was a natural. He was constantly sniffing out opportunities and tackling them with vigor. Along the way, he picked up what some close to him now joke is an addiction to the feeling of a closing handshake—that sign that needs were met, a deal was done, and both parties would walk away happy.

The term “workaholic” might be putting it mildly. I am told that after one particularly hairy negotiation ended in success, Bob exclaimed, “I'd sell it back to him—if I could turn around and buy it again!”

Unlike many of his colleagues, Bob did not necessarily always aspire to public service.

In fact, it took a direct appeal to his builder's instincts to set this political career in motion.

Bob saw a message in a church bulletin. They needed volunteers with construction experience to help a mission in Haiti. Bob went along, along with his father, and he came back with the drive to keep doing real good for real people.

That conviction eventually took him to city hall in Chattanooga, where people still talk about the transformative wave of education reform, economic development, and public improvements that was unleashed during his time as mayor.

Tennesseans liked what they saw. They decided the next chapters of BOB CORKER's serial success story should be written right here on their behalf in the U.S. Senate.

So if I even tried to relate a comprehensive catalog of everything BOB CORKER has gotten accomplished in the Senate, this speech would be our last act of business before New Year's, but a few highlights stand out especially.

It was early in Senator CORKER's first term when the financial crisis threw our economy into chaos, but this fired-up freshman immediately started working with committee chairs and new friends across the aisle. He became a pivotal player, putting his private sector acumen to great use in helping craft policies to begin restoring stability.