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Senate

The Senate met at 10:03 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable CINDY HYDE-SMITH, a Senator from the State of Mississippi.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

O God, who has stretched out the heavens and marches on the waves of the sea, Your great works are too marvelous to understand. Thank You for the glory of the sunrise and the majesty of the sunset, for Your miracles that are without number and for Your providence that sustains us.

Strengthen our lawmakers. Empower them this day to mount up on wings like eagles, running without weariness and walking without fainting. May their consistent communion with You be expressed in their thoughts, words, and actions. Lord, make them one in the common cause of justice, righteousness, and truth.

We pray in Your loving 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 senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, December 11, 2018.

To the Senate:

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

appoint the Honorable CINDY HYDE-SMITH, a Senator from the State of Mississippi, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ORRIN G. HATCH,
President pro tempore.

Mrs. HYDE-SMITH thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

BUSINESS BEFORE THE SENATE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I think it is time the Senate subject itself to a bit of a reality check. Today is December 11. Here are just some of the things the Senate needs to accomplish before this Congress adjourns:

We need to confirm more of the President's nominees for the judiciary and for the executive branch, such as the well-qualified nominee to be Deputy Secretary at the Department of Treasury, whom we are currently considering.

We need to reach an agreement to fund the remaining one-fourth of the Federal Government that was not covered by regular appropriations.

We need to make a substantial new investment in the integrity of our borders and the security of American families.

We need to take up and pass the conference report for the farm bill to honor our commitments to our Nation's growers and producers.

This week alone, we need to dispense with the debate pertaining to the situation in Yemen and an attempt by some of our Democratic colleagues to undo reforms that protect Americans' private, personal information as they exercise their First Amendment rights.

In addition, at the request of the President and following improvements to the legislation that have been se-

cured by several Members, the Senate will take up the recently revised criminal justice bill this month. I intend to turn to the new text as early as the end of this week.

As a result of this additional legislative business, Members should now be prepared to work between Christmas and New Year's if necessary in order to complete our work. Let me say that again. Unless we approach all this work in a highly collaborative, productive way and take real advantage of unanimous consent to expedite proceedings, it is virtually certain that the Senate will need to be in session between Christmas and New Year's in order to complete this work.

The Senate is a consent-based institution. Expediting this work would require an extraordinary degree of collaboration from everyone. So Members should either prepare to cooperate and work together or prepare for a very, very long month.

In just a few hours from now, we will receive an indication of whether that cooperation will begin to take shape. My friend the Democratic leader and his counterpart in the House are scheduled to meet with President Trump at the White House later today.

For the Nation's sake, I hope my Democratic friends are prepared to have a serious discussion and reach an accommodation with the President on funding for border security. Otherwise, circumstances are beginning to resemble a movie we have seen before. It was only this past January when Democrats chose to manufacture a government funding lapse over the issue of illegal immigration. It didn't work out very well.

The reality is that the President's request is entirely reasonable. And before today's partisan considerations set in, I bet it might have looked reasonable to many of the majority of the Senate Democrats who joined in support of physical border security legislation back in 2006—some 12 years ago.

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



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