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Senate

The Senate met at 3 p.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. GRASSLEY).

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

O Lord, our God, we praise Your holy Name. Continue to be our strength and protection. Lord, inspire our Senators to strive to fulfill Your purposes, seeking always to please You. Prosper the works of their hands until the kingdoms of this world become the springboard for Your eternal reign.

Help our lawmakers to express their gratitude to You with deeds of faith and love as You use them to bring hope from despair and joy from sadness.

We pray in Your sacred 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. HAWLEY). The majority leader is recognized.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 311

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I understand there is a bill at the desk due for a second reading.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read the title of the bill for the second time.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 311) to amend title 18, United States Code, to prohibit a health care practitioner from failing to exercise the proper de-

gree of care in the case of a child who survives an abortion or attempted abortion.

Mr. MCCONNELL. In order to place the bill on the calendar under provisions of rule XIV, I object to further proceeding.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection having been heard, the bill will be placed on the calendar on the next legislative day.

S. 1

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, for the past week now, the Senate has been considering a package of legislation to strengthen our Nation's diplomatic presence in the Middle East. The Strengthening America's Security in the Middle East Act would renew our commitment to Israel's security, expand cooperation with Jordan, and impose new consequences on the perpetrators of Assad's brutality in Syria.

When America's national security and vital interests are at stake, some circumstances require not only the use of important diplomatic tools but also direct involvement from the United States. That is why I introduced an amendment to S. 1, so the Senate can speak clearly and directly about the importance of our Nation's ongoing missions in Afghanistan and Syria.

I know a broad consensus about American leadership in the world exists in this body. It is time to reaffirm our commitment to this vision and to the men and women fighting on the ground to uphold it. I was glad to see a big bipartisan majority of this body vote to advance my amendment on Thursday. I hope a similar majority joins me in voting to approve this mainstream amendment today, and I look forward to passing this thoroughly bipartisan legislation later this week.

NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT ACT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, once we complete our work on S. 1, the Senate will turn to the Natural Resources Management Act, under the leadership of Chairman MURKOWSKI and the Natural Resources Committee.

This legislation combines more than 100 individual lands bills. It will allow communities across America to responsibly develop their land and natural resources while maintaining a balance with locally supported conservation.

On a national scale, this legislation will achieve things such as permanently reauthorizing the Land and Water Conservation Fund and codifying sportsmen's recreational access to Bureau of Land Management and National Forest areas nationwide. On a local scale, communities across America are looking forward to specific provisions.

I am particularly proud that the legislation will include two bills I introduced to safeguard historic Kentucky landmarks and designate Camp Nelson and Mill Springs Battlefield as national monuments. I know virtually every one of our colleagues is enthusiastic about local achievements it will deliver in their States as well.

This bipartisan legislation is a major priority dating back to the last Congress, when nearly 90 Senators cosponsored its components, and I am glad we will be able to turn to it soon.

S. 130

Mr. MCCONNELL. First, Mr. President, later today, the junior Senator from Nebraska will give the Senate an opportunity to address an issue of profound moral importance. I understand that he plans to ask consent to pass legislation that ought to be the very definition of something that receives unanimous consent in this body. It would help ensure that all baby girls and boys who are born alive—all of

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



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them—have their right to life respected and receive the medical care they need.

It builds on the Born-Alive Infants Protection Act of 2002, which did indeed pass this body by unanimous consent, and creates enforcement mechanisms if abortion providers fail to give these newborn babies the medical attention and care they so obviously deserve.

Completely apart from the rest of our debate on the issue of life, how could this question be any clearer? What could be more unanimous than this: What medical professionals owe every single newborn American citizen, regardless of the circumstances of their birth, is attention and care—not neglect and certainly not violence. Frankly, it is harrowing that this legislation is even necessary.

What is even more disturbing when, last week, a Democratic Governor was unable to clearly and simply state that, of course—of course—these newborn babies have human rights that must be respected.

I have been a proud cosponsor of Senator SASSE's legislation, and I hope none of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle invent any reasons to block this request later today. That would make quite a disturbing statement.

If they do inexplicably block Senator SASSE's effort, I can assure them this will not be the last time we try to afford newborns this fundamental legal protection.

THE ECONOMY

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, one final matter—last week, our Nation received yet another wave of good news about our strong economy and all the opportunities it is creating for working Americans.

Republicans' pro-growth, pro-family economic policies have helped our Nation's job creators and small businesses hit the accelerator, and middle-class families across the country continue to reap the rewards.

The Labor Department tracks the total amount that U.S. employers spend each year on wages and benefits for workers. Last quarter, the year-on-year increase was the highest it has been in more than 10 years. Last month, the total percentage of Americans who are employed hit its highest mark since December 2008.

Let me say that again. Following Republican policies, we are now seeing the largest annual jump in a decade in the amount spent on workers' compensation and a higher percentage of Americans working than we saw at any point—at any point—under President Obama.

An expert described these data to the New York Times: "Employers are still actively looking for jobs, and with wages ticking up, it looks like workers are getting some more bargaining power."

Another expert put it this way: "The virtuous cycle continues . . . a vir-

tuous cycle of a continuously growing U.S. labor market."

So I am confident we will hear more about this from the President in his address Tuesday evening. The state of our Nation's economy is thriving and working Americans are feeling the boost. This is what happens when Republican policies get Washington out of the way.

I suggest the absence of a quorum. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

THE STATE OF THE UNION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, tomorrow, President Trump will belatedly report on the state of the Union before a joint session of Congress. The reason for the delay, of course, is the 35-day government shutdown that President Trump precipitated as an attempt to extract taxpayer money for a wall he promised Mexico would pay for, a pointless exercise, if there ever were one—a pointless exercise that punished hundreds of thousands of innocent public servants and took billions of dollars out of our economy.

We are all glad that the government is back open and Federal workers are back on the job and getting paid, but the recent government shutdown speaks to the fundamental uncertainty about the state of our Union.

Tomorrow, the President will say, predictably, that the state of our Union is strong, but the truth is that the state of the Trump economy is failing America's middle class, that the state of the Trump healthcare system is failing American families, that the state of the Trump administration is embroiled in chaos and incompetence, and that the state of the President's foreign policy is incoherent, inconsistent, and cynical in the extreme and has undermined American power and our national interests. In sum, the state of our Union is in need of drastic repair.

Let's begin with the state of the Trump economy. Corporate America has cashed in on the Trump tax bill, but working America has been left behind. Since the tax bill passed over a year ago, corporations have announced plans to repurchase more than \$1 trillion of their own stock—a practice that benefits corporate executives and wealthy shareholders but not many average workers. Meanwhile, Reuters reports that the tax bill had no major impact on whether businesses made

capital investments or hired more workers. The very wealthy—the big, powerful corporations—fed this line: Help them, and everyone will be helped. Our Republican friends swallowed that—hook, line, and sinker.

The only good news about this tax bill that passed last year is that it showed what a false promise it was—\$1 trillion for the wealthy through stock buybacks and other things and virtually nothing for American workers. The President promised—remember this?—that his tax bill would deliver a \$4,000 raise to the average household. The reality is that wages for average workers have remained quite stagnant. Workers are still making less today than they did in 1973 after adjusting for inflation. The effect of the Trump economy has been a deepening of the inequalities and wealth disparities that threaten the future of the middle class and the future of the American dream. The rich are getting richer. The middle class is being hollowed out. That is the state of the Trump economy.

How about healthcare? The state of our healthcare system is dire. Premiums are higher than they should be. Out-of-pocket costs are higher than they should be. The uninsured rate is, once again, rising. This is the result of a relentless sabotage by the Trump administration and congressional Republicans. The Trump administration expanded junk insurance plans. It supports a lawsuit that would end protections for Americans with preexisting conditions. It all but eliminated programs that help people find the right coverage for themselves and their families, and it continues to routinely propose and approve policies that cause people to lose coverage and cause health insurance markets to spiral into chaos.

When any one of us goes home, one just has to be home for a short time before hearing of people with horror stories of how they had normal procedures and were told that this doctor was not covered, that this procedure was not covered, and that it would be several thousand dollars out of their pockets, which they can't afford. We are told of one horror story or another—of the cost of something like insulin, which is way through the roof, when it should be available because it does so much for those who have diabetes. We hear story after story, and those aren't isolated. That is the state of the Trump healthcare system.

The past 2 years have been a wholesale assault by the Trump administration on Americans' healthcare. I doubt President Trump will mention that tomorrow, but if you ask American families of the No. 1 problem they face, it will be the cost of good healthcare, which seems more and more out of reach. So the state of the Trump healthcare system is dire.

What is the state of the Trump administration? The state of the Trump administration is chaos. Underqualified staffers cycle in and out of our