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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.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.

Almighty God, the source from which we come and the goal to which we travel, enter into our lives and make us more like You. Strengthen our Senators. Equip and empower them with Your heavenly grace, so that they may solve the problems of our times with Your wisdom and love. May their labors help make America a nation You can trust and bless. Lord, grant that the powers of justice, understanding, and cooperative endeavors will be used to unify this land we love.

We pray in Your strong 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.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CRAMER). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 340

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 senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 340) to promote competition in the market for drugs and biological products by facilitating the timely entry of lower-cost generic and biosimilar versions of those drugs and biological products.

Mr. McCONNELL. In order to place the bill on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I would object to further proceedings.

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

STATE OF THE UNION MESSAGE

Mr. McCONNELL. Last night, the President shared a hopeful vision of a bright future for our country. In part, he reminded us that the future is bright because of the big steps we have taken together in the past 2 years to move the Nation forward—steps such as historic tax reform that has helped middle-class families across America keep more of what they earn; the regulatory reforms that have amped up our economy and fueled job creation; the landmark legislation we passed to combat the opioid epidemic; the long-needed investment in our Armed Forces that gives our servicemembers the tools and training they need to keep us safe.

As I mentioned yesterday, some of these accomplishments were delivered by Republicans alone, but the lion's share of them were bicameral and bipartisan. They combined the ideas and priorities of both sides of the aisle and both Chambers of Congress. So even though I know our Democratic colleagues' first instinct these days is to reflexively criticize anything President Trump says or does, I hope they took some pride in the strong state of our Union which the President described.

This great country belongs to all of us, and it is going to take all of us to keep moving forward. As the President put it, "cooperation, compromise, and the common good."

Last night, the President highlighted, in particular, the national challenges he sees as most urgent and as top priorities for his administration this year. Tackling them will require that same bipartisan spirit in Congress. He restated the administration's commitment to addressing the humanitarian and security crisis at our Nation's southern border, to fighting on behalf of American workers and job creators, to rebuilding America's infrastructure, and to helping simplify families' budgets by lowering the cost of healthcare and prescription drugs. On these and other challenges, the American people deserve the full attention of a fully functioning Congress. They deserve a Democratic Party that puts the public interest ahead of political spite and comes to the table to negotiate necessary compromises.

Well, it will not be long before we will see if this institution can rise to the occasion. The next deadline for appropriations will arrive in a little over a week, and Members in both Chambers will need to prove we can move past making points and start actually making a difference.

Throughout the coming year, if we are serious about advancing meaningful policy, this basic requirement will remain the same—good-faith efforts between a Democratic-controlled House and a Republican-controlled Senate and President Trump's administration.

Another challenge the President mentioned is the ongoing obstruction of his nominations to the executive branch and the Federal courts. He was absolutely right about that. To a historic degree, Senate Democrats have slow-walked well-qualified nominees, gumming up committee consideration and burning weeks of valuable time on the floor. As I have said time and

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



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