



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 116th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 165

WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2019

No. 37

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.

Eternal God, Spirit of light and truth, beauty and freedom, thank You for Your sustaining grace.

Continue to strengthen our lawmakers that they may play their part in the life of our times. Lord, give them wisdom to think clearly, speak kindly, and act bravely. Make them patient and thoughtful with one another as they seek to serve You and country with integrity. May they remember that without You, they will fail to do their best or reach their highest. Keep them from stumbling or slipping.

We pray in Your Holy 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 (Mrs. HYDE-SMITH). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will pro-

ceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Andrew Wheeler, of Virginia, to be Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for 1 minute as in morning business.

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

PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEES

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, when it comes to considering Presidential nominees, I have said in the past that I don't believe in playing by two sets of rules.

If the Democrats insist on rejecting President Trump's Cabinet nominees or insist on rejecting qualified judges based on an ideological litmus test, they can't expect kid-glove treatment for the next Democratic President.

However, I urge Senators to end this arms race now. We can start the disarmament by agreeing to the Blunt-Lankford proposal based on the bipartisan agreement that was worked out with then-Majority Leader Reid in the 113th Congress.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

NORTH KOREA

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I would like to begin with a few words on President Trump's Hanoi summit with North Korea. The President should be commended for his personal commitment to persuading Kim Jong Un to pursue a different path.

By January 2017, it was clear the prior administration's policy of strategic patience had not worked. In retrospect, it was not very strategic to sit patiently while North Korea dramatically expanded its nuclear and missile

capabilities. The Trump administration, in taking a different path, moved quickly to adopt the policy of maximum pressure, rallying international partners to respond firmly to North Korea's provocations. The President also demonstrated a willingness to engage the North Korean leader directly, breathing new life into our diplomacy to solve this seemingly intractable problem.

The President has gone the extra mile to demonstrate his sincerity in wanting to resolve this issue. It was smart to bring Kim Jong Un to Singapore and to Vietnam to expose the North Korean delegation to the kind of economic prosperity that could be possible if he were to choose a new path.

High-level diplomacy can carry high-level risk, but the President should be commended for walking away when it became clear insufficient progress had been made on denuclearization. Kim Jong Un now has a long train ride home, and he will have time to reflect on the future that is still within North Korea's grasp, but the President has demonstrated that such a future must be accompanied by real denuclearization.

Every country has a stake in North Korea's denuclearization. I hope China and other countries with influence over Kim Jong Un will do their part to urge him to return to the negotiating table and seize the opportunity to bring prosperity to the people of North Korea and peace and stability to the Korean Peninsula and to the region.

NOMINATIONS

Madam President, on another matter, this week, the Senate has made progress in confirming President Trump's nominees. On Tuesday, Eric Miller became the 31st circuit court judge to be confirmed under this administration. Yesterday, we confirmed Michael Desmond to serve as Chief Counsel at the IRS.

Of course, this progress is only remarkable given the Senate Democrats'

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



Printed on recycled paper.

S1555