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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 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:

O God, our righteous judge, the upright will behold your face. Lord, we thank You for Your power that keeps us from stumbling on life's road. Today, give our Senators the wisdom to find in You their refuge and strength. As they face complex challenges, may they flee to You for guidance and fellowship. Lord, as they make You the foundation of their hope and joy, empower them to run life's race without weariness, knowing that Your bountiful harvest of goodness is certain.

We pray in Your merciful 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. BLACKBURN). Under the previous order, 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 legislative clerk read the nomination of Neomi J. Rao, of the District of Columbia, to be United States Circuit Judge for the District of Columbia Circuit.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, yesterday the Senate confirmed a well-qualified jurist chosen by President Trump to serve on the Third Circuit Court of Appeals. Paul Matey of New Jersey will bring a wealth of experience to the bench, and I was proud to support his nomination.

We also voted to advance the nomination of Neomi Rao to the DC Circuit. This nominee is yet another of the President's excellent choices to serve as a Federal judge.

Ms. Rao graduated with honors from Yale and the University of Chicago School of Law. Her record includes a distinguished tenure in academia, public and private sector legal experience, as well as a clerkship on the U.S. Supreme Court.

Most importantly, in testimony before our colleagues on the Judiciary Committee, she demonstrated a commitment to maintaining the public trust and upholding the rule of law. So the committee favorably reported Ms. Rao's nomination, and soon the Senate will have an opportunity to continue fulfilling our advice and consent responsibilities by voting to confirm her to the Federal bench.

We will also vote this afternoon on the nomination of William Beach, who has been waiting for over a year to take his post as Commissioner of Labor Statistics. Our colleagues on the HELP Committee recommended Mr. Beach to the floor in December of 2017. A full year later, with no progress, he was returned to the White House. Now he is

finally getting a floor vote. This pointless obstruction needs to change, but I am glad we can at least confirm Mr. Beach this week.

YEMEN

Madam President, now, on another matter, the Senate will soon vote on a resolution under the War Powers Act. I strongly oppose this unnecessary and counterproductive resolution and urge our colleagues to join me in opposing it.

From the outset, let me say this. I believe it is right for Senators to have grave concerns over some aspects of Saudi Arabia's behavior, particularly the murder of Jamal Khashoggi. That is not what this resolution is about, however. In December, the Senate voted on a resolution that addressed this institution's concerns about Saudi Arabia.

If Senators continue to have concerns about Saudi behavior, they should raise them in hearings and directly with the administration and directly with Saudi officials, as I have done, and they should allow a vote on the confirmation of retired GEN John Abizaid, whose nomination to be U.S. Ambassador to Riyadh is being held up once again by Democratic obstruction.

They should also allow a vote on the nomination of David Schenker to be Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs. He has been held up here for nearly a year. If we want to solve problems in the Middle East through diplomacy, we will need to confirm diplomats.

Regarding Yemen, it is completely understandable that Senators have concerns over the war, the American interests entangled in it, and its consequences for Yemeni civilians. I think there is bipartisan agreement, shared by the administration, that our objective should be to end this horrible conflict, but this resolution doesn't end the conflict. It will not help Saudi pilots avoid civilian casualties. It will

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



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