



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 116th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 165

WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, MARCH 14, 2019

No. 46

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.

Our Father in Heaven, we praise You for the greatness of Your faithfulness. Faithfully guide our lawmakers along the path that leads away from pride, providing them with the humility that comes with wisdom. Lord, help them to remember that in the multitude of counselors, there is safety. May this knowledge prompt them to be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger. Open their hearts to Your love, their minds to Your truth, and their desires to Your guidance. Replenish them daily with Your grace and power.

We pray in Your sovereign 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 (Mrs. HYDE-SMITH). The majority leader is recognized.

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—H.R. 1 AND H.R. 1617

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I understand there are two bills at the desk due for a second reading en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read the bills by title for the second time.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 1) to expand Americans' access to the ballot box, reduce the influence of big money in politics, and strengthen ethics rules for public servants, and for other purposes.

A bill (H.R. 1617) to direct the Director of National Intelligence to submit intelligence assessments of the intentions of the political leadership of the Russian Federation, and for other purposes.

Mr. MCCONNELL. In order to place the bills on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I object to further proceedings en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection having been heard, the bills will be placed on the calendar.

DECLARATION OF NATIONAL EMERGENCY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, later today, the Senate will vote on a resolution related to the state of emergency the President has declared on our southern border. Let me first say, I support the President's decision. So I will vote today to uphold it and reject this resolution of disapproval.

I want to begin where this whole discussion should begin—beyond all the partisan rhetoric and denials of reality we see from our friends across the aisle, just the facts of the matter, and the facts are not at all ambiguous. There is a clear border security and humanitarian crisis on the southern border of the United States of America.

It was only last week that the President's top officials in the matter—Secretary Nielsen and CBP Commissioner McAleenan—each came before Congress to once again lay all this out.

The man charged with protecting our Nation's borders didn't mince words ahead of last week's hearing. This is what he had to say: "The system is well beyond capacity, and remains at the breaking point."

The system is well beyond capacity and remains at the breaking point. The Commissioner pointed out to our colleagues on the Judiciary Committee

that the 76,000 attempted illegal crossings documented in February marked an 11-year high for that month, and, based on CBP projections, by the middle of this month—tomorrow—apprehensions for fiscal year 2019 will already be twice what they were in all of fiscal year 2017.

In front of the House Homeland Security Committee, the Secretary of Homeland Security elaborated by saying the following: "Our capacity is already severely strained, but these increases will overwhelm the system completely."

This is one of the President's senior advisers—a Cabinet Secretary—and she is telling Members of Congress that the current situation is very much a crisis, one that requires immediate action.

Over the past 5 years, CBP has recorded a 620-percent increase in apprehensions of family units at the U.S.-Mexico border. Last year's figure marked an alltime high.

Research suggests upward of 30 percent of women apprehended at the border report experiencing sexual assault during the journeys. Lately, a daily average of 56 individuals taken into CBP custody have required emergency medical care.

The men and women of the Border Patrol are great. They are well trained, they are highly skilled, and they volunteered for a very challenging job, but today they are facing challenges they are not fully equipped to overcome.

It is no secret I take the Senate as an institution extremely seriously. I take the separation of powers extremely seriously. I take Congress's prerogative over appropriations extremely seriously, but—as I argued yesterday in the context of the Yemen resolution—the Senate should not be in the business of misusing specific resolutions to express opinions on more general matters.

President Trump has not invoked some vague article II authority or simply swept aside existing law, as President Obama did to establish his DACA

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



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