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Senate

The Senate met at 12:30 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 God, our hope for years to come, guide our lawmakers on each step of their pilgrimage. Make them supreme in compassion, mercy, and love, in fellowship with one another and their constituents.

Lord, bring them more and more into oneness with You and obedience to Your commands. Fill them with the spirit of Your peace. In their weakness, give strength. In intenseness, give serenity. In discouragement, grant hope. And in weariness, bring rest. Work through them to fulfill Your will for our Nation and world.

We pray in Your mighty 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. LANKFORD). The majority leader of the Senate is recognized.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—H.R. 7

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

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 7) to amend the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 to provide more effective remedies to victims of discrimination in the payment of wages on the basis of sex, and for other purposes.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The bill will be placed on the calendar on the next legislative day.

NATO

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, first I want to take a moment to thank NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg for his remarks at this morning's joint session of Congress. I am proud that the Secretary General could be here with us in Washington as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization celebrates its 70th anniversary this week.

It is no exaggeration to say that over these seven decades, with steady American leadership, NATO shaped world history for the better. The proud history of alliance and solidarity has paid huge dividends to NATO's member states and to the world.

NATO, with American leadership, kept the peace and created the conditions for an unprecedented period of prosperity for the United States, as well as its allies. It has deterred major Soviet and Russian aggression and prevented a third world war.

When communism's Iron Curtain fell over much of the world, we stood together for democracy. When the post-Cold War transformation could have roiled Eastern and Central Europe, we stood together for stability. When brutal killers trampled human rights in the Balkans, we stood together for innocent lives. And when terrorist fanatics killed thousands of Americans on

September 11, we stood together for freedom. NATO allies remain with our troops in Afghanistan to this very day.

It is essential that we keep the alliance healthy and strong. The threats we face are numerous, and not least among them, in a kind of throwback to the alliance's founding, is an assertive Russia that has barely even pretended to honor international commitments, brazenly violated arms control agreements, invaded and occupied Ukraine and Georgia, and conducted cyber operations and so-called active measures against NATO allies. As President Trump has made it clear, keeping NATO strong means that all allies must commit to NATO's collective security.

For our own part, after years of President Obama's defense cuts, the United States has turned the corner on defense spending, investing more in readiness and modernization. We need to sustain that progress, but, of course, NATO allies must live up to their promises to invest in their own defense. This isn't about meeting an arbitrary budget number but about building real capabilities that are needed to meet real requirements identified by the alliance's military commanders. As the Secretary General has pointed out, our allies are starting to follow our lead. They are on track to contribute an additional \$100 billion in defense spending.

There are also other ways NATO must adapt to meet the threats of the 21st century. It is essential that the alliance follow through on the reforms championed by former Secretary Mattis. NATO must modernize its capabilities to address interoperability challenges, enhance military mobility across the continent, and improve the speed at which it makes decisions.

For today, I just want to thank the Secretary General for his address this morning. Every American should be

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



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