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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable KEVIN CRAMER, a Senator from the State of North Dakota.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal Father, strong to save, whose arm has bound the restless waves, we praise You for Your magnificent love that awakens us each day.

Thank You for lawmakers who strive to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with You. Lord, continue to guide their feet and teach them Your paths.

In these complex times, show yourself strong on behalf of those who love You. Solve the riddles that confound us. Confuse those who seek to hinder the unfolding of Your loving providence.

Lord, bring sanity to a world that often seems to spin out of control. Nothing is impossible for you, so transform our dark yesterdays into bright tomorrows.

We pray in Your strong Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer 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.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. GRASSLEY).

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, May 1, 2019.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable KEVIN CRAMER, a Senator from the State of North Dakota, to perform the duties of the Chair.

CHUCK GRASSLEY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. CRAMER thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, this week the Senate is continuing to make progress in consideration of the President's nominees. By the end of this week, three more executive branch and five court vacancies will have been filled with thoroughly qualified individuals.

Already, these uncontroversial nominees have earned overwhelming bipartisan support. Yesterday, more than two-thirds of the Senate voted to confirm William Cooper to serve as general counsel for the Department of Energy. Mr. Cooper's expertise and energy policy was evident to Chairman MURKOWSKI and our colleagues in committee who voted by voice to report this nomination to the full Senate. Now we have put a sharp lawyer on the job at DOE.

Later in the day, we confirmed two more well-qualified executive branch nominees to the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation and the State Department's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs by even wider margins. Each received bipartisan support in committee. So, again, I am glad to see a similar degree of swift, reasonable consideration here on the floor.

I might add that these are the kinds of nominees who, a few years ago, would have been approved on a voice vote. Today the Senate will turn to a slate of judicial nominees with their own impressive trail of credentials—things like prestigious clerkships and strong reviews from the American Bar Association. Most importantly, all have demonstrated their commitment to the rule of law.

Celebrating small wins for comity in the personnel business is, of course, only necessary in the wake of, literally, years of unprecedented partisan obstruction. But I will readily express my hope that in the coming days and weeks, we will continue to work toward clearing the Executive Calendar backlog and confirming more well-qualified nominees.

HEALTHCARE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, on another matter, while the Senate may be writing a new chapter of bipartisan productivity, the same cannot be said for the House under Democratic leadership. On this side of the Capitol, we have passed timely legislation to address real, urgent policy priorities. S. 1, for example, helps fight back against anti-Semitism and attends to several other pressing matters with respect to American foreign policy in the Middle East.

The Senate debated the bill and passed it by a wide bipartisan majority. We sent it over to the House, and now it is just sitting there, gathering dust. It is gathering dust because Democratic leadership is more interested in making flashy political points and picking fights with the President than in making meaningful bipartisan progress.

House Democrats are uninterested in our important foreign policy legislation. What has captured their energy and attention instead? This week they are giving prime billing to a scheme

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



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