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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable THOM TILLIS, a Senator from the State of North Carolina.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal Spirit, the center of our joy, guide and bless our lawmakers. Inspire their minds; assist their wills; and strengthen their hands that they may not falter or fail. Do for them more than they can ask or imagine as You continue to use them as instruments for Your glory. Lord, give to all who labor in this Chamber the wisdom, humility, and competence sufficient for this day. May the words of their mouths and the meditations of their hearts be acceptable to You, O God, our rock and our redeemer.

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 legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, May 9, 2019.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable THOM TILLIS, a Sen-

ator from the State of North Carolina, to perform the duties of the Chair.

CHUCK GRASSLEY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. TILLIS 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, the Senate has continued to make significant progress in the personnel business. After 2 years of systematic heel-dragging from our friends across the aisle, even on the least controversial nominations, the modest reform the Senate adopted last month is helping us to get back on track.

Another slate of capable nominees is now on its way to work for the American people. They are precisely the same sort of unobjectionable sub-Cabinet nominees who, until very recently, would have been subjected to 30 hours of debate. They would have tied up the floor for days before being confirmed anyway. They are perfect examples of why the Senate returned to our long-standing norms of processing lower level nominations. Now the American people are getting the government they elected at a more reasonable pace.

To be clear, the silly partisan games haven't all been cleared away from our work on nominations. For example, just yesterday, we confirmed Judge Joseph Bianco to serve on the Second Circuit by a relatively close vote of 54 to 42. Remember, for a judge, in the scope of Senate history, that counts as a close shave. So are we looking at a controversial person? Are we looking at an individual whom the Senators agonized over and painstakingly studied?

Judge Bianco brings a unanimous "well-qualified" rating from the ABA,

and he has already served as a judge for 13 years in the Eastern District of New York. Oh, by the way, he was confirmed to that position by a voice vote. In fact, back then in 2005, one of Mr. Bianco's most vocal supporters in the Senate was none other than our friend the Democratic leader. Here is how he praised his New Yorker to the Judiciary Committee in 2005.

Senator SCHUMER said: "I am proud to support someone as outstandingly qualified and well respected as Mr. Bianco."

Well, that was then and this is now.

The nominee is the same. Actually, he is not quite the same because now he has been a very highly regarded district judge for 13 years, so this nominee is actually even better. Yet the occupant of the White House is different. In this political moment, as we know, my Democratic colleagues' commitment to the "outrage industrial complex" seems to crowd out reasonable judgment.

So now, this week, the Democratic leader lumped the same individual he used to champion into what he described as "hard-right nominees." Then the Democratic leader and almost every other Member of his conference proceeded to vote against him. He voted against the same nominee he praised in such generous terms before.

I can only conclude that now the "outrage industrial complex" comes first, not the facts, not the nominee's qualifications. The "outrage industrial complex" comes first. The individual whom the Democratic leader used to champion and who passed by a voice vote in 2005 now receives this partisan treatment. What was once a routine matter for acclamation becomes a party-line vote just because this President is the one who nominated him.

Look, fortunately, at the end of the day, the outcome is the same. Judge Joseph Bianco, along with a slate of other well-qualified nominees, is now on the job, and the Republicans 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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