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Senate

The Senate met at 3 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.

Father of all, give us the wisdom to cultivate reverential awe for You. Inspired by this wisdom, empower our Senators to strive to please You. May our lawmakers remember that You are an ever-present help during turbulent times, eager to deliver those who call on Your Holy Name.

Lord, sustain our Senators with Your might. Continue to bless and keep us all. Make Your face to shine upon us and be gracious to us. Lift the light of Your countenance upon us and give us Your peace.

We pray in Your sacred 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.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HAWLEY). The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for 30 seconds as in morning business, please.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SREBRENICA GENOCIDE

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, 24 years ago radical Serb forces committed the worst genocide on European soil since the Holocaust. In and around the hallowed grounds at Srebrenica, over 8,000 Bosnians were murdered out of ethnic and religious hatred.

Iowa, my State, is now home to many Bosnians who bore witnesses to

those atrocities. I pray that they and their families find peace, as well as justice. Ethnic and religious hatred must never be tolerated, and we must not forget the victims of this crime.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

BUSINESS BEFORE THE SENATE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, the Senate is getting started on another busy week in which we will complete more important business for the American people. We will confirm a number of well-qualified nominees, as well as a number of treaties that pertain to international commerce and keeping our economy strong.

First, the nominations. Later this afternoon, we will build on 2½ years of confirming talented, capable jurists to our Federal courts and vote to advance the nomination of Judge Peter Phipps for the Third Circuit Court of Appeals.

Judge Phipps is a graduate of the University of Dayton and Stanford Law School. His impressive professional record includes time in private practice, a clerkship on the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals, and 15 years of decorated service with the Department of Justice.

At DOJ, while handling sensitive and high-profile cases in the Federal Programs Branch, Judge Phipps left a lasting impression on colleagues and opposing counsel alike. Litigators who worked both with him and against him have written to the Senate to praise his “piercing intellect, deep knowledge of the law . . . and personable relations with everyone in the courtroom.”

A number of his former DOJ colleagues attest that his “ability to master complex issues quickly made him the sort of lawyer other lawyers would turn to with questions or for counsel.”

Listen to this. Leon Panetta, the former Secretary of Defense to President Obama, has worked with Judge Phipps in the past and has great things to say about his “legal acumen, dedication, attention to detail, and integrity.” He says: “I believe that Peter will serve with honor and highly recommend his confirmation.” That is President Obama’s Secretary of Defense.

Given all this, it is hardly surprising that when Judge Phipps was first nominated to serve as district judge for the Western District of Pennsylvania, the Senate confirmed him on a voice vote. This body saw what everybody else had seen—an impressively qualified, intellectually excellent individual who firmly understands what the job of a judge does and does not entail in our constitutional system.

So I am sorry that this nominee who earned a voice vote to his current position will now require a cloture vote this afternoon, but, nevertheless, I look forward to voting to advance his nomination today and voting to confirm him later in the week. I urge our colleagues to join me.

Following that nomination, the Senate will tend to another of this body’s unique responsibilities—the ratification of treaties. For the better part of the last century, the United States has engaged in bilateral tax treaties with foreign trading partners. These measures cultivate robust trading relationships and put in place important clarifications to ensure that American businesses can avoid double tax burdens.

Today, America is engaged in about 60 such treaties with major allies and developing partners alike. Together, they account for literally trillions of dollars in foreign investment across our country.

This week, there are several more awaiting consideration. The Senate needs to act on treaties with Spain, the Swiss Federation, Japan, and Luxembourg. I have heard from job creators

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



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in my State of Kentucky about the importance of creating more certainty by getting these treaties approved, and I expect my colleagues have heard similar things from employers in their States as well. So these measures should be taken up and ratified without delay.

On behalf of American workers and entrepreneurs, I hope each of our colleagues will join me in voting yes this week.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, over the weekend, President Trump launched a series of insults at Democratic congresswomen, suggesting they “go back” to the countries they came from, despite the fact that three of the four were born in the United States and that citizenship in America, by birth or naturalization, is inherently equal and has been for centuries.

These lawmakers are women of color. Telling them to “go back” to their countries is one of the oldest and crudest tropes to malign nonwhite Americans. The President’s comments drip with racism.

We don’t know why the President woke up on Saturday and made these comments—perhaps to distract from his administration’s barbaric immigration policy, which rips children away from their parents, even little children; perhaps to distract from the humanitarian crisis he has exacerbated at our border and perhaps to distract from his planned but not really executed deportation raids, which many in his own bureaucracy do not want to carry out and feel are difficult to carry out in a fair way because they can’t be done fairly. Perhaps it is even to distract from his administration’s attempt to dismantle our healthcare system through the courts. Maybe the President just feels comfortable stoking racial divisions in this country. Maybe that is his milieu. After all, this is part of a pattern of behavior that began with the birther treatment of President Obama and his characterization of Mexicans in his announcement speech, continued with his attack on an American-born judge of Mexican descent, his proposed Muslim ban, his response to Charlottesville, and includes comments about Caribbean and African nations that cannot be repeated here on the floor of the Senate.

Whatever the reason, whatever the motivation, the President’s comments demand condemnation from all corners of the political spectrum—all corners. It has become frightfully common for many of my Republican colleagues to let these moments sail by without saying even a word.

Republican leadership especially rarely criticizes the President directly, even in a situation like this that so clearly merits it. I am left to wonder if the silence of many Republicans in the wake of President Trump’s xenophobic tweets is out of embarrassment or agreement—embarrassment or agreement. Both are inexcusable.

Some of my Republican colleagues are hoping that the President realizes the error of his ways and disavows or deletes his tweets from yesterday. But the President just walked out of the White House a few hours ago and doubled down on his racist comments.

My Republican friends, he is not backing off. Where are you when something this serious, this bigoted, this un-American, happens? If you are saying to yourselves “Well, he got us our big tax cut; well, he’s taking regulations off big corporations; well, he pulled out of the Paris Accords, so we have to go along with this racism,” you are making a deal with the devil. It is so wrong, so wrong.

The President of the United States is supposed to bring this country together. It is clear this President will not, doesn’t want to, and revels in dividing us. No American President has done this. No American President has resorted to open and bold-faced bigotry so often. His goal—President Trump’s goal—sadly is not to unite but to divide. That is how he has climbed the ladder politically, and it is just awful.

It is incumbent on all of us, Democrat and Republican, to call him out when he does this and remind the President and the country what America truly stands for. Anything short of that is insufficient and is un-American.

It could be argued that Republicans who fail to do so because of shame, because they are afraid of offending the President’s supporters, because they are afraid of the President, or worse, because they agree with the President—those who fail to condemn the President are fellow travelers on the President’s racist road, whatever their motivation.

Speaker PELOSI has said that the House will introduce a resolution denouncing the President’s comments. Our intention is to do the same in the Senate. We will see how many Republicans will sign on.

9/11 VICTIM COMPENSATION FUND

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, on another matter, last Friday, in an overwhelmingly bipartisan vote, I am happy to say that the House reauthorized the 9/11 Victim Compensation Fund and made it virtually permanent.

I want to thank all of my colleagues in the House. Above all, I want to com-

mend the first responders for their advocacy and support of this legislation. The first responders are the heroes of this story. They are the Washingtons and the Madisons and the Monroes of the 21st century, the great Americans—each in their own modest way. Not only did they rush to the towers on that fateful day, risking their lives to save others, but then, when the illnesses started coming upon them, even though many of them were sick, they came to Washington and fought tirelessly for their brothers and sisters who might get sick in the future. Zadroga and Feal, Pfeiffer and Alvarez—these are the names of American heroes. They represent the greatness of America. We should honor them now by passing the House bill to reauthorize the Victim Compensation Fund as soon as possible—no more delays, no strings attached, no waiting for some other must-pass vehicle to attach it to. The bill passed the House with such overwhelmingly bipartisan support that it deserves a clean vote in the Senate.

I say to my friend, Republican Leader MCCONNELL: If it is good enough for Leader MCCARTHY and Whip SCALISE, who voted for it, surely it is good enough for the Republican leader in the Senate.

Only 12 voted against it. So many very conservative Republicans—many tea party Republicans—voted for the bill in the House. That bill is the bill that should be brought to the floor, brought here quickly. It will pass overwhelmingly and could be on the President’s desk, certainly in the next week.

If Leader MCCONNELL would put this bill on the floor this week, it would pass this week. It would go to the President’s desk this week. It would be signed into law this week, and we could put this issue to rest this week, once and for all.

We can’t put the illnesses to rest. Those first responders, many of whom have gotten ill, too many of whom have passed away, and many more of whom have these illnesses in their bodies but they don’t even know it yet—they could then do their job of helping heal their fellow first responders and helping heal themselves and looking after their families. They wouldn’t have to keep coming here.

We need to move this bill quickly. I urge Leader MCCONNELL, once again, to put the bill on the floor, honor those brave first responders who are no different from our soldiers and our Armed Forces who rushed to danger and risked their lives for us and our freedom. Put it on the floor, and we can get this done. We can get it done this week.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.