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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.

Lord of the harvest, we continue to seek You, for we desire to please You. You, O God, are our light and salvation, so we refuse to be afraid. As our lawmakers seek to walk with integrity, provide them with a harvest of truth, justice, and righteousness. May they cultivate such ethical consistency that their words will be undergirded by right actions.

Lord, keep them aware of Your continued presence as they find in You fullness of joy. Show them the path to life, as You guide them to Your desired destination.

We pray in Your merciful 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 (Mrs. HYDE-SMITH). The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, I ask to speak as in morning business for 1 minute.

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

NOMINATION OF MARK T. ESPER

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, the United States of America has the mightiest military in the world to protect our freedoms and to guarantee peace around the world. That is why it is so important to keep check on the Pentagon's financial ledgers. Tax-

payers expect their money to be spent wisely, and it is our job in Congress to make sure that money is spent wisely.

I am glad Secretary Esper has said he will work with whistleblowers to stop wasteful spending and to prevent more spare parts rip-offs. These are things that have been of interest to me over the last several decades with the defense budget. I met with Secretary Esper, and I believe he has his heart in the right place to help us accomplish these goals.

He has also indicated he will prioritize getting a clean audit of our military services and an opinion that can be certified because the 2010 law that all the audits ought to be certified was not met by 2017, and they are still not done. How can you follow the money if it can't be audited?

Our men and women in uniform deserve no less than to make sure every dollar in the Defense Department is spent wisely.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam 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 MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

BUDGET AGREEMENT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, yesterday the administration informed congressional leaders that Secretary Mnuchin, White House Chief of Staff Mulvaney, and Acting OMB Director Vought reached a deal with Speaker PELOSI to prevent a government-fund-

ing crisis and deliver on President Trump's top priorities.

The agreement secures the most important priority of the Republican conference. In fact, in my view, it is the most important obligation of the entire Congress; that is, securing the resources we need to provide for the common defense. This deal does it.

Over the past 2½ years, Republicans in Congress have worked with the President to stop and reverse the decline in the strength and readiness of our Armed Forces. After years of insufficient funding that hurt readiness and tied commanders' hands, Congress and President Trump have secured badly needed funding increases to rebuild and modernize the U.S. military.

There is still more work ahead. The progress we have made remains tenuous. America's adversaries are not taking their foot off the gas anytime soon, so we can't either. We have to keep up the momentum. This agreement provides the stability of funding our military deserves and requires. Thanks to tough negotiating by the Trump administration, this deal delivers for the security of our Nation. It delivers for our men and women in uniform. It protects the progress of the last 2 years and provides the fuel for further progress. That is the bottom line.

The nature of divided government means this certainly isn't the agreement Republicans would have written all by ourselves; for example, I will never understand why our Democratic colleagues treat funding the U.S. Armed Forces like a Republican priority that somehow needs to be matched up with additional spending that Democrats like in order to make it palatable for them. It seems to me every one of us, both sides, should jump at the chance to fund defense adequately.

Alas, that is not a mystery that is going to be solved for me in the immediate future. The fact is, the Federal

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



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