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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.

Almighty God, sovereign of our Nation and Lord of our lives, thank You for infusing us with the confidence that You order our steps each day.

Give our lawmakers courage and a strong resolve to glorify Your Name, as they trust the unfolding of Your providence. As they remember what You have already done to bless this Nation, inspire them to march confidently toward tomorrow's difficulties with total dependence on Your power. May they recommit themselves each day to faithfully fulfilling the awesome responsibility You have entrusted to them. Lord, be their strength and shield this day and always.

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 ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

TRIBUTE TO JOHNNY ISAKSON

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I welcome my colleagues back to the Senate. I hope all of us took advantage of the past weeks that we spent in our home States and with our constituents.

Washington is where we come to work. We come here to fight for our neighbors and for the places we love and are proud to hail from.

The American people know this is a highly charged political moment. They haven't sent us here to stage pitched battles or score political points. They elected us to make a difference for them and their families. We do that by taking care of the people's business and by collaborating in good faith to complete our work and attend to the pressing matters that are before us.

While we were spread out across the country, we heard an unwelcome announcement from our dear friend and colleague, the senior Senator from Georgia. Senator JOHNNY ISAKSON has determined that his health challenges will lead him to conclude his distinguished 15-year Senate career at the end of December, putting Georgians first, like always.

His departure will be a significant loss for the people of Georgia and for the 99 of us here in this Chamber. Senator ISAKSON is a tireless legislator. In particular, he is a dogged advocate for our Nation's veterans. But he is even more than that. JOHNNY is universally seen as one of the warmest, friendliest, most respectful, and most collaborative Members of this body. He has strong views and solid principles, but he knows that broad, often bipartisan cooperation is the way to advance those very goals.

BUSINESS BEFORE THE SENATE

Mr. MCCONNELL. I hope that as the Senate tackles the important matters before us in the weeks and months ahead, we will not only make sure to savor our last few months working alongside this great friend and colleague but also to embody his example in our work. Here is what that work will need to include:

Right off the bat this week, the Senate will begin working through a slate

of nominations to important Federal offices. The American people deserve to be governed by the government they voted for, and every time we confirm another one of the uncontroversial, amply qualified public servants whom President Trump has selected for these executive branch posts, we fulfill a constitutional responsibility and make manifest the people's decision.

Of course, in the days and weeks ahead, another major duty before us will be the appropriations process. Just like last year, under the leadership of Chairman SHELBY and Ranking Member LEAHY, I am confident we can make significant progress on regular appropriations this month and then pass an interim continuing resolution to prevent any funding lapse while that work continues.

Let me say that again. A major focus of the Senate this month will be moving forward as many of the regular appropriations bills as possible and then passing a temporary continuing resolution for the outstanding parts of the government before the end of September.

We have the parameters in place, thanks to the bipartisan funding agreement President Trump signed last month. Now it is time for the rubber to meet the road and for the Senate to pass appropriations bills this month.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BLUNT). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

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



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EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Kelly Craft, of Kentucky, to be Representative of the United States of America to the Sessions of the General Assembly of the United Nations during her tenure of service as Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The President pro tempore.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

IOWA TOWN MEETINGS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, during August, I continued my annual tradition of holding at least one Q&A in every one of Iowa's 99 counties. I go to Iowans where they work and live to hear what is on their minds so that I can better represent them in the Senate. No matter the setting, my citizens of Iowa set the agenda.

On August 27, with a town meeting in Spencer, IA, I completed the 39th consecutive year of my annual 99 county meetings. I look forward to continuing my dialogue with Iowans throughout the rest of this year, just to emphasize that I hold a lot more than just 99 meetings with my constituents every year.

I yield the floor.

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

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

TRIBUTE TO DAYTON POLICE OFFICERS

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I rise to honor six brave Ohioans—Sergeant William C. Knight, Officers Brian Rolfes, David Denlinger, Vincent Carter, Ryan Nabel, and Jeremy Campbell.

Last month, on Sunday, August 4, the people in my State woke up to devastating news: A shooter had opened fire overnight—at about 1 o'clock that Sunday morning—in Dayton. In 31 seconds, a shooter had fired 40 bullets. He had taken the lives of 9 Ohioans and had injured 27 more. This was another senseless tragedy caused by gun violence. As awful as it was, it could have been even worse had it not been for the bravery and skill of the officers I just mentioned.

While others ran from danger, these men ran toward it. They stopped the shooter within 31 or 32 seconds after the first shot was fired. They saved,

certainly, dozens of lives as the shooter was about to go into a very crowded nightclub. Had they not gotten to him in less than a minute, the shooter would have entered the doorway he was headed toward of the Dayton institution Ned Peppers, which was filled with Ohioans who were out on a Saturday night.

Dayton Police Chief Richard Biehl said: "Had this individual made it through the doorway of Ned Peppers with that level of weaponry, there would have been catastrophic injuries and loss of life." That didn't happen because these dedicated public servants did the job they signed up to do—to protect the people they serve.

Over the past month, as we have mourned those Ohioans we have lost, we have also seen the incredible strength and solidarity of the Dayton community. People from all over the city have come together to support the families of the victims and to support the law enforcement officers and officials who threw themselves in harm's way to protect their friends and neighbors.

Chief Biehl reported that the Dayton Police Department has received hundreds of emails, social media messages, and thank you cards—all from people thanking them for what they have done for this city.

Dayton has faced so many challenges this year. Each time, these officers and the entire department have risen to the occasion. They kept the public safe when a KKK group held a hate rally, and they helped residents after devastating tornados hit this summer. Now they are dealing with this awful gun violence and all kinds of tragedies that have fallen on this community.

I thank my friend Mayor Whaley, who is here in Washington today to help honor these officers and who has truly held this community together. I think she put it best when she said that Dayton has had, "as I like to term it, one hell of a summer, and you all have been on the front lines of it."

I met these officers at the Miami Valley Hospital 3 days after the shooting. The President of the United States was there to honor these officers and to see the victims and some of the injured Daytonians who were victims of the shooting and to see their families.

I said to the President that the best way he can honor these police officers is to bring the Senate back into session and pass universal background checks as 93 percent of the American public supports it and as Congress has already passed it overwhelmingly. We could do it in a day.

I thank Sergeant Knight, Officer Rolfes, Officer Denlinger, Officer Carter, Officer Nabel, Officer Campbell, and all of the Dayton law enforcement for responding far beyond the call of duty in saving the lives of so many people in the Miami Valley.

I thank their families, many of whom are here today. We know how families sacrifice alongside law enforcement

and servicemembers. Yet so often families don't get the recognition they deserve. To the officers and their families, we are forever grateful.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

BACKGROUND CHECKS

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, today this Chamber, once referred to as the greatest deliberative body, must take action. We have people all over the country who want to see action, people who want to see change, people who are crying out for their leaders in Washington to do their jobs.

These days, the U.S. Senate has become a place where legislation goes to die and the important issues of the day go ignored, in addition to inaction—major, major issues, significant issues, like climate change and infrastructure and immigration reform.

Today I will focus on three things that are right before us—three bills in the gun legislation area that right now are on the leader's desk—and two other areas, election protection and bringing down the cost of prescription drugs, where we could literally take action immediately.

I focus on these because they all involve bills that have passed the House, and the Senate could literally act today. I focus on these because, in all three cases, the timing is urgent.

I am talking about inaction in the wake of terrible tragedies in Dayton and El Paso and in Midland-Odessa, all in just the last month; inaction in protecting our elections and making it easier for people to vote; inaction in response to serious issues of healthcare costs, particularly prescription drug prices.

First, I will speak about gun safety. Think about the courage—the incredible courage—of the people who were in Dayton and in El Paso and in Midland-Odessa, of the mom who literally shielded her baby from death as she herself perished from gunshot wounds, but she kept that baby alive. Or how about the grandpa who died shielding his wife and granddaughter or the off-duty soldier who carried children away to safety? All of that happened in that store.

As we approach the anniversary of 9/11, I think also about the first responders in all of these mass shootings. Those in Dayton, OH, got there in 1 minute—1 minute—but, still, we lost nine people in 30 seconds. But they were there in 1 minute and saved so many lives. That is courage.

That is the courage of ordinary people doing extraordinary things, and I believe in this place of extraordinary power that their courage must be matched. The courage must be