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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.

Almighty God, our fortress and might, deliver us from clouds of pessimism and fear. Lead our lawmakers in these challenging times, fulfilling Your purposes through them. Be exalted, O God, above the highest heaven, as You demonstrate Your power to make the crooked places straight.

Have mercy upon us and protect us, for Your unfailing love and faithfulness sustain us. Shine Your glory over all the Earth as we learn to trust You at all times.

And, Lord, we thank You that Senator GRASSLEY has had another wonderful birthday.

We pray in Your strong 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 unanimous consent to speak for 1 minute as in morning business.

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

CONSTITUTION DAY

Mr. GRASSLEY. Since the day I was born, I have celebrated Constitution Day. That is because the 39 delegates signed the U.S. Constitution on September 17, which is exactly 146 years before I was born. It is a gift to share my birthday with the historic signing of our Nation's founding charter.

The Constitution lends weight to the resilience of our heritage and to the heroes who fought to defend and protect our borders at home and from distant shores around the world.

On this Constitution Day, it is my hope that Americans of all ages will reflect upon the blessings of freedom handed down from one generation to the next and protected by the U.S. Constitution.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. MCCONNELL. The American people deserve for the Federal Government to spend their money in a considered, deliberate fashion, and until very recently, we have been on a track to conduct a smooth, regular appropriations process for this year.

More than a month ago, leaders in both parties, in both Chambers, and at both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue all agreed to terms that had been negotiated by the Speaker of the House and the President's team. It specified topline funding levels and put guardrails around the appropriations process to keep out poison pills and all of our other disagreements.

So yesterday, to keep us on track, I began the process to advance the first set of appropriations bills. The next step is a vote tomorrow to begin consideration of a package of House-passed funding bills that Speaker PELOSI grouped together. They include several of the domestic funding bills along with the legislation to fund the Department of Defense. There should be no reason for Democrats to vote against this first procedural step.

As Chairman SHELBY and our committee colleagues continue to process

Senate legislation, proceeding to this floor action will help to keep us on track toward passing as many of the 12 bills as possible this month before we turn to a temporary continuing resolution.

So it has been distressing to hear troubling signals from the Democratic side. We have heard that they may choose to filibuster the Defense funding bill. They may block the very increase of defense funding that they all just agreed to a month ago.

Progress on our shared priorities, good faith cooperation in areas of disagreement—it seems all of this may be taking a backseat to a familiar litany of partisan stumbling blocks. My Democratic colleagues seem eager to bog down the funding process with all their outstanding disagreements with the President, in other words, taking exactly the kind of partisan approach we had successfully avoided last year and in which both sides pledged just last month—just a month ago—to avoid this time as well.

A couple of weeks ago, everyone at the table seemed to understand that the world was too dangerous to leave funding for our military vulnerable to poison pill riders or political copouts. I wish Democrats would keep bearing that in mind today.

So whatever rationale my colleagues across the aisle may offer for these new disruptions, let's get one thing straight: Holding defense funding hostage for political gain is a losing strategy, not only for Members of this body, but a losing strategy for the safety and strength of our Nation.

As partisanship bogs us down here in Washington, Moscow and Beijing are not exactly slowing down to wait for us. Our two most capable great-power adversaries are expanding their own capabilities and modernizing their forces by the day.

In the current international system, delivering on our promises to America's men and women in uniform is not

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



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