



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 116th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 165

WASHINGTON, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2019

No. 193

Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable KEVIN CRAMER, a Senator from the State of North Dakota.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Holy God, You make the clouds Your chariot and walk upon the wind. We see Your works in the rising of the Sun and in its setting. For the beauty of the Earth and the glory of the skies, we give you praise.

Today make our lawmakers heirs of peace, demonstrating that they are Your children as they strive to find common ground. May they take pleasure in doing Your will, knowing that by so doing, they are fulfilling Your purposes in our world. Lord, you are never far from us, but often we are far from You, so show us Your ways and teach us Your paths.

We pray in Your merciful Name. 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 senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, December 4, 2019.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby

appoint the Honorable KEVIN CRAMER, a Senator from the State of North Dakota, to perform the duties of the Chair.

CHUCK GRASSLEY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. CRAMER thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Richard Ernest Myers II, of North Carolina, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of North Carolina.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

HONG KONG

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, on Sunday, as we Americans savored the holiday weekend and gave thanks for our liberty, the people of Hong Kong took to the streets to demand their own. Many waved American flags.

Hongkongers are continuing to speak up for the freedoms and the autonomy that Beijing has slowly tried to erode. As long as Beijing does not relent, it looks like the people of Hong Kong are

not going to relent either. In local elections last week that were largely symbolic, pro-democracy candidates literally blew away the candidates the Chinese Communist Party would have preferred in a literal landslide. Not even Beijing's propagandists can credibly blame this massive display of popular revulsion at their authoritarianism on the "black hand" of the West. In spite of China's propaganda, the West should not stay silent as Beijing sneaks to snuff out dissent in Hong Kong.

Just a few days prior, the Congress and President Trump had sent our clearest signal yet that, yes, the United States of America stands with Hong Kong. The Senate unanimously passed the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act, and the President signed it into law. It delivered important updates to the original U.S.-Hong Kong Policy Act, which I authored back in 1992. Preserving freedom and promoting democracy has required constant vigilance with Hongkongers since Communist China assumed control of the region.

I have been proud to stand with that effort. With my original legislation, we paved the way for cooperation between Hong Kong and the United States, codifying and strengthening economic ties and facilitating the robust exchange of ideas and support of greater democracy in the autonomous region. We have laid the foundation for a U.S.-Hong Kong relationship that has strengthened both their society and ours and created leverage to hold Beijing accountable.

Back in 1992, I observed that democracy was "finally gaining a tenuous foothold in Hong Kong." Recent months certainly have reminded us just how tenuous that foothold can be when an authoritarian country flexes its muscles. They reminded us just how intent Beijing remains on exporting its oppressive surveillance state not just within mainland China but also into Hong Kong and, frankly, all around the world.

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



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