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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 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.

Eternal God, the giver of every good and perfect gift, help our Senators to listen clearly to Your sacred Word and find wisdom in Your guidance. May they remember Your teachings and courageously follow them.

As You guide them along the right path, keep them from stumbling. May they live such exemplary lives that they will be like sunlight at dawn, growing brighter with the passing hours.

Lord, give our lawmakers wisdom to carefully guard their thoughts, to strive to speak truthfully, and to refuse to deviate from integrity.

We pray in Your great 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. BLACKBURN). The Senator from Iowa.

PRESCRIPTION DRUG PRICING REDUCTION ACT

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, Senator WYDEN and I received a letter from the Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research. Their letter endorsed our bipartisan Prescription Drug Pricing Reduction Act, which tries to respond to what we are hearing from our constituents about the public outrage over the big increases in prescription drugs.

Now, it happens with Parkinson's disease that about 1 million Americans

have it, and it seems like up to now there is no way to stop it or cure it, but thanks to modern medicine, the symptoms can be treated to help patients live a much better life.

Ninety percent of all individuals diagnosed with Parkinson's disease are on Medicare. Our bill, the bill to reduce prescription drug prices, would help these seniors afford their medicine with a cap on out-of-pocket expenses. In other words, they would know at the beginning of the year that they only have to spend x number of dollars on drugs, no more.

Of course, this brings me to what Congress should be doing. Congress needs to act, not only for those with Parkinson's disease, but for all Americans who need our help.

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. DURBIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

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 Matthew Walden McFarland, of Ohio, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of Ohio.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

TOBACCO TO 21

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, this week we are going to be voting on some appropriation bills. They are rather large. They call them minibuses. But there will be six or eight appropriations bills bunched together, and they will include things other than strictly spending measures.

One of the areas that will be addressed is the age that you must reach to purchase tobacco and vaping materials in the United States. It is known euphemistically as T-21, and I have supported it for years. The notion of raising the purchasing age to 21 for these products, to me, just makes sense.

We know that they are addictive. Both cigarette tobacco and vaping materials have nicotine in them, a highly addictive chemical. Raising the age of purchase across the United States to 21 makes sense.

But I am disappointed as well. Although I originally sponsored this bill, there have been several revelations in the last few months, which call for us to move far beyond the idea of establishing a new age for purchasing these products, and let me be specific.

One of the things we have been working on is trying to address the shocking increase in the use of vaping materials and e-cigarettes by young people across America. It has been called a public health epidemic, not by a politician but by the Commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration. That Commissioner told us, as well as the Surgeon General of the United States, that this is an issue that cannot be ignored.

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



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