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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 7, 2020, at 2 p.m.

Senate

MONDAY, JANUARY 6, 2020

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.

Eternal God, we are gratefully aware that You are the giver of every good and perfect gift. You shower us with Your mercies each day.

We are further aware of our unworthiness because of Your goodness. We all, like sheep, have gone astray. Lord, we are prone to wander and to leave You, the God we love.

As our Senators work today, make them extensions of Your power in our world. Use them as Your eyes, ears, hands, and feet to accomplish Your purposes. Lord, make them Your ambassadors. May they arrange their priorities according to Your will and view their challenges from an ethical perspective, striving to seek Your will in all they think, say, and do. May they find, in challenging moments, opportunities to renew their faith in You.

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 (Mr. HAWLEY). The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask permission to address the Senate for 1 minute.

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

LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I want to wish all Iowans and maybe, in turn, all Americans a happy New Year. As 2020 begins, I am focused on passing the United States-Mexico-Canada trade agreement. I am leading a meeting of the Finance Committee tomorrow to report out the bill, so the Senate floor vote is imminent.

I am continuing to work, in a bipartisan way, to lower the cost of prescription drugs with the Grassley-Wyden Prescription Drug Pricing Reduction Act.

In the coming weeks, I will begin my 40th annual 99-county tour of my State to continue to hear what is on the minds of Iowans so that I can better serve them in the U.S. Senate.

I look forward to remaining in touch with Iowans as the new decade begins. 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. MCCONNELL. Mr. 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 PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

IRAN

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, as the Senate convenes this afternoon, we find our Nation facing two grave and serious choices. One concerns our unity at home and the future of our Constitution. The other involves our strength abroad and the security of our homeland. Both situations demand serious, sober treatment from Congress. Both require that we put enduring national interests ahead of the factionalism and short-termism the Founding Fathers warned us about. But, unfortunately, seriousness has been in short supply lately—in very short supply—from the determined critics of President Trump, and our Nation, of course, is worse for it.

Last Thursday, the United States took decisive action to end the murderous scheming of Iran's chief terrorist. Qasem Soleimani had spent numerous years masterminding attacks on American servicemembers and our partners throughout the Middle East and expanding Iran's influence. Despite sanctions and despite prohibitions by the U.N. Security Council, he roamed throughout the region with impunity.

His hands bore the blood of more American servicemembers than anyone else alive. Hundreds of American families have buried loved ones because of him. Veterans have learned to live with permanent injuries inflicted by his terrorists. In Iraq, Syria, and beyond, the

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



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entire region felt the effects of his evil tactics.

We should welcome his death and its complication of Tehran's terrorism-industrial complex, but we must remain vigilant and soberly prepared for even further aggression.

It is completely appropriate that this decision would generate interest and questions from this body. We can and we should learn more about the intelligence and thinking that led to this operation and the plan to defend American personnel and interests in the wake of it.

I am glad the administration will hold an all-Senators briefing on Wednesday. It will be led by Secretary of Defense Esper, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Milley, Secretary of State Pompeo, and CIA Director Haspel.

Unfortunately, in this toxic political environment, some of our colleagues rushed to blame our own government before even knowing the facts, rushed to split hairs about intelligence before being briefed on it, and rushed to downplay Soleimani's evil while presenting our own President as the villain.

Soon after the news broke, one of our distinguished colleagues made a public statement that rightly called Soleimani a "murderer" and then, amazingly, walked that message back when the far left objected to the factual statement. Since then, I believe all of her criticism has been directed at our own President.

Another of our Democratic colleagues has been thinking out loud about Middle East policy on social media. Mere days before President Trump's decision, this Senator tore into the White House for what he described as weakness and inaction. "No one fears us" he complained. "Trump has rendered America impotent in the Middle East." But since the strike, he has done a complete 180. That same Senator has harshly criticized our own President for getting tough. Ludicrously, he and others on the left have accused the administration of committing an illegal act and equated the removal of this terrorist leader with a foreign power assassinating our own Secretary of Defense.

Here is what one expert had to say about it. Jeh Johnson, President Obama's own former Pentagon general counsel and Secretary of Homeland Security, said:

If you believe everything that our government is saying about General Soleimani, he was a lawful military objective, and the president, under his constitutional authority as commander in chief, had ample domestic legal authority to take him out without—

Without—

an additional congressional authorization. Whether he was a terrorist or a general in a military force that was engaged in armed attacks against our people, he was a lawful military objective.

That was the former Secretary of Homeland Security in the Obama administration, Jeh Johnson, an expert on these things.

Our former colleague, Joe Lieberman, who ran for Vice President on the Democratic ticket in 2000, wrote this morning: "In their uniformly skeptical or negative reactions to Soleimani's death, Democrats are . . . creating the risk that the U.S. will be seen as acting and speaking with less authority abroad at this important time." That is how a former Democratic Senator sees it.

The Senate is supposed to be the Chamber where overheated partisan passions give way to sober judgment. Can we not at least wait until we know the facts? Can we not maintain a shred—just a shred—of national unity for 5 minutes—for 5 minutes—before deepening the partisan trenches?

Must Democrats' distaste for this President dominate every thought they express and every decision they make? Is that really the seriousness that this situation deserves?

The full Senate will be briefed on Wednesday. I expect the committees of oversight will also conduct hearings and that the Senators will have plenty of opportunities to discuss our interests and policies in the region.

I urge my colleagues to bring a full awareness of the facts, mindfulness of the long history of Iran's aggression toward the United States and its allies, and a sober understanding of the threat Iran continues to pose.

Could we at least remember we are all Americans first, and we are all in this together?

IMPEACHMENT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, in the meantime, at this dangerous time, House Democrats continue to play political games with their partisan impeachment of the Commander in Chief. Last year, House Democrats conducted the least thorough, most rushed, most unfair impeachment inquiry in history. For weeks, Democrats said they could not wait for due process, could not conduct a normal or fair inquiry because removing the President from office was so incredibly urgent—incredibly urgent.

Well, the unseriousness was obvious then and should be even more obvious now because Speaker PELOSI is now sitting on the articles she claimed were so very urgent. She has delayed this indefinitely so the architects of the failed House process can look for ways to reach over here into the Senate and dictate our process as well.

Democrats have tried to insist that the Senate deviate from the unanimous bipartisan precedent set in the 1999 trial of President Clinton and write new rules for President Trump. They have tried to precommit the Senate to redoing House Democrats' slapdash work for them and pursuing avenues Chairman SCHIFF himself didn't bother to pursue.

The Senate has a unanimous bipartisan precedent for when to handle midtrial questions such as witnesses:

in the middle of the trial. That is when that was done the last time, and that is the way it should be done this time.

In 1999, every single U.S. Senator agreed to establish basic parameters for the start of the trial upfront and reserve midtrial questions, such as witnesses, until later. The vote was 100 to 0. That was good enough for President Clinton, so it ought to be good enough for President Trump. Fair is fair.

House Democrats' hunger to break our Senate precedents, just like they broke their own House precedents, could not be more telling, but the Senate does not just bob along on the currents of every news cycle. The House may have been content to scrap their own norms to hurt President Trump, but that is not the Senate. Even with a process this constitutionally serious, even with tensions rising in the Middle East, House Democrats are treating impeachment like a political toy—like a political toy—treating their own effort to remove our Commander in Chief like some frivolous game.

These bizarre stunts do not serve our Constitution or our national security. They erode both. My Democratic colleagues should not plow away American unity in some bizarre intramural competition to see who dislikes the President more.

They should not disdain our Constitution by rushing through a purely partisan impeachment process and then toying around with it. Governing is serious business. The American people deserve better, a lot better than this.

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 Jovita Carranza, of Illinois, to be Administrator of the Small Business Administration.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.