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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable MIKE LEE, a Senator from the State of Utah.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal God, we offer You our hearts. Guide our lawmakers. May they strive to permit justice to roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream. Grant that they will join You in Your messianic thrust to bring good news to the marginalized, to announce freedom for those who suffer, and to give sight to the ethically, morally, and spiritually blind. Lord, inspire our Senators to live pure and blameless lives, seeking to bring the greatest glory to You.

We pray in Your strong 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 legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, February 4, 2020.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable MIKE LEE, a Senator from the State of Utah, to perform the duties of the Chair.

CHUCK GRASSLEY,
President pro tempore.

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

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, leader-speak time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

IMPEACHMENT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, these past weeks, the Senate has grappled with as grave a subject as we ever consider: a request from a majority of the House to remove the President. The Framers took impeachment extremely seriously, but they harbored no illusions that these trials would always begin for the right reasons.

Alexander Hamilton warned that “the demon of faction” would “extend his sceptre” over the House of Representatives “at certain seasons.” He warned that “an intemperate or designing majority of the House” might misuse impeachment as a weapon of ordinary politics rather than emergency tool of last resort. The Framers knew impeachments might begin with overheated passions and short-term factualism. But they knew those things could not get the final say, so they placed the ultimate judgment not in the fractious lower Chamber but in the sober and stable Senate.

They wanted impeachment trials to be fair to both sides. They wanted them to be timely, avoiding the “procrastinated determination of the charges.” They wanted us to take a deep breath and decide which outcome would reflect the facts, protect our institutions, and advance the common good. They called the Senate “the most fit depository of this important trust.” Tomorrow, we will know whether that trust was well-placed.

The drive to impeach President Trump did not begin with the allegations before us. Here was reporting in April of 2016, before the President was the nominee: “Donald Trump isn’t even the Republican nominee yet . . . [but] ‘Impeachment’ is already on the lips of pundits, newspaper editorials, constitutional scholars, and even a few members of Congress.”

Here was the Washington Post headline minutes after President Trump’s inauguration: “The campaign to impeach President Trump has begun,” the Washington Post says.

The Articles of Impeachment before us were not even the first ones House Democrats introduced. This was go-around number, roughly, seven. Those previously alleged high crimes and misdemeanors included things like being impolite to the press and to professional athletes. It insults the intelligence of the American people to pretend this was a solemn process reluctantly begun because of withheld foreign aid. No, Washington Democrats’ position on this President has been clear literally for years. Their position was obvious when they openly rooted for the Mueller investigation to tear our country apart and were disappointed when the facts proved otherwise. It was obvious when they sought to impeach the President over and over.

Here is their real position: Washington Democrats think President Donald Trump committed a high crime

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



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