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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 19, 2020, at 10:30 a.m.

Senate

MONDAY, MAY 18, 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 Master, the Father of us all, we thank You that, through Your Spirit, You have provided our legislative body with the talents and capabilities to fulfill Your purposes.

May our Senators remember that this body has many parts, each making its distinctive contribution to the success of the whole. As our lawmakers acknowledge and honor the value added by each Member of this body, unite them with faith, civility, courage, and gratitude.

And, Lord, we pray for the first responders and healthcare workers, who stand on the frontlines during this global health crisis.

We pray in Your unifying 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 unanimous consent to speak in morning business for 45 seconds.

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

GRADUATING CLASS OF 2020

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, this time of year is typically spent celebrating students of all ages as they graduate on to their next endeavors. Most graduations have a different look this year due to the pandemic, but the occasion has not lost its significance. Graduations are a time to celebrate the hard work and dedication students put into their educations.

I congratulate all Iowans who are graduating this spring as you begin new chapters in your lives. Barbara and I wish you all more years of continued success.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to hold our Nation on high alert.

More than 1.4 million Americans have been infected; more than 80,000 lives have been tragically lost; and the livelihoods of tens of millions of working families have been turned upside down in what seems like the blink of an eye. Our Nation's healthcare system has not been stressed by contagion on this scale in over a century, and unemployment has not been this high since the Second World War.

A new generation of American heroes—from medical professionals, to lab researchers, to grocery store workers, to custodians and janitors, to community volunteers—has been called up to the frontlines to serve its neighbors and our country. So, for several weeks now, the Senate has counted ourselves among those ranks of essential workers. They are showing up for our country, so we are showing up for them. With respect to the pandemic itself, we are conducting rigorous oversight of the Senate's historic CARES Act rescue package and are helping to plan the pivot toward reopening.

Last week, Chairman ALEXANDER and the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions engaged with Dr. Fauci, Dr. Redfield, Admiral Giroir, and other top experts to discuss paths for schools and businesses to reopen, and numbers of our colleagues are joining me and Senator CORNYN in thinking proactively about the issue of legal liability that could crush the recovery on the runway. We need strong legal protections to ensure that our historic recovery efforts are not drained away from healthcare workers, schools, and universities or small businesses in order to line the pockets of trial lawyers.

At the same time, we have kept our eye on the ball on other significant global challenges. Last week, on a bipartisan basis, the Senate reauthorized critical surveillance authorities for our national security professionals. We also made sure to include important new reforms to begin to address the abuses that marred the 2016 election,

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



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the disturbing details of which are continuing to come to light every day. Our action on that subject is not finished.

Thanks to leadership from Senator RUBIO, we passed legislation to continue ratcheting up the pressure on the Chinese Communist Party. In this case, our bill will shed new light and impose new consequences for the egregious abuses against the Uyghur people and other Muslim minorities. We also confirmed well-qualified nominees to important roles at the National Counterintelligence and Security Center, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the Department of Homeland Security, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

In other words, we have done more for the American people in 2 weeks on this side of the Capitol than the House of Representatives has done in the last 2 months. In the two months that the House Democrats have spent away from their duty stations, they have seemingly given themselves just one assignment—to draft an enormous political messaging bill and brand it as coronavirus relief.

Yet, even on this basis, they have failed. The 1,800-page doorstop that Speaker PELOSI dropped last week was appropriately greeted as the legislative equivalent of a standup comedy. There were tax hikes on small businesses in the midst of a small business crisis, and there were targeted tax cuts for the wealthiest people in the bluest States. There were two separate taxpayer-funded studies on diversity and inclusion in the market for marijuana. In sum, it was a \$3 trillion wish list slapped together in a clumsy effort to never let a good crisis go to waste—serious work here in the Senate and partisanship pointlessness over in the House.

The Senate will stay on course and continue our serious work at this serious time. Tomorrow morning, our colleagues on the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs will hear from Secretary Mnuchin and Fed Chairman Powell on the latest status of the CARES Act implementation efforts. The Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee will meet this week to consider the nomination of Brian Miller to serve as Special Inspector General for the pandemic recovery programs. The Special Committee on Aging will be examining the challenges facing American seniors during this pandemic as both the virus itself and the social distancing measures take a heavy toll on older Americans. Of course, we will continue to uphold our responsibilities beyond the scope of COVID-19. We will consider more nominations to the Federal Election Commission and to the Federal bench.

Tomorrow, our colleagues on the Intelligence Committee will vote on reporting the nomination of JOHN RATCLIFFE to serve as Director of National Intelligence. This role is essential for monitoring and countering

evolving threats from Russia to China, to terrorist groups, and for ensuring the intelligence community's important work is not tainted by partisan bias or political weaponization.

We have a busy week ahead of us. This pandemic is not going to defeat itself; a careful reopening will not plan itself; and our Nation's other challenges are not about to politely step aside in the meantime. All kinds of American heroes across the country are tackling the coronavirus head on. We are going to do all we can to keep them safe and supported while they do.

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 Scott H. Rash, of Arizona, to be United States District Judge for the District of Arizona.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, 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. SCHUMER. 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 MINORITY LEADER

The Democratic leader is recognized.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, now, for the third week in a row, the Republican majority in the Senate has no COVID-related business on the agenda. For the third week in a row, Leader MCCONNELL has scheduled zero votes on legislation having to do with the crisis.

Senate Democrats have had to relentlessly pressure our Republican colleagues to secure even the most routine oversight hearings on the pandemic. If we had not pressured them, I doubt there would be any hearings at all, and they are few and far between. The hearings will be the only work we will have done in the Senate on COVID-19 in the entire month of May, and the Republican majority has had to be pressured into doing even those. There are now more than 35 million Americans out of work through no

fault of their own. Almost 1.5 million Americans are sick, and nearly 90,000 have died. Yet Senate Republicans have decided to take the month off from the coronavirus.

The American people may be wondering: What is the Republican-led Senate doing instead of addressing this urgent national crisis? What could be more pressing? What is the Republican Senate doing in the midst of the crisis?

Well, Leader MCCONNELL has scheduled five rightwing judges for the floor of the Senate, and the Republican chairman of the Homeland Security Committee will be holding a hearing designed to slander the family of the President's political opponent. Is the chairman of Homeland Security calling in FEMA to find out if our hospitals have enough PPE? No. He wants to echo Kremlin-backed conspiracy theories in order to go on a fishing expedition to smear Joe Biden's son.

We all know this is what the President focuses on instead of the COVID crisis, but must our Republican colleagues gamely follow such an absurd, diversionary, and untruthful agenda? I guess so. It is a shame.

Even more shameful, the company that the Senator from Wisconsin wants to issue a subpoena for is voluntarily cooperating and providing relevant documents to the committee. Did you hear that? They want to make a big show of subpoenaing, but the company says it will cooperate. It is a show. It is a sham. It has nothing to do with COVID and everything to do with Kremlin-backed rumors that they want to use to divert attention from the President's poor showing on COVID. The subpoena is just for show. It is not necessary because the company will cooperate. It is a way to kick up dirt for exclusively partisan purposes.

It would be bad enough if they were doing this when COVID-19 wasn't raging, but with COVID-19 raging, to spend time doing this instead of focusing on the way to get relief to people—unbelievable. It is a low point for that committee, a low point for the Senate.

This is what is on the Senate Republicans' agenda in the midst of historic unemployment and a national crisis: five rightwing judges and the exploitation—a show, mock hearing for partisan mudslinging. America is in crisis, and Senate Republicans are rearranging the Nation's deck chairs and trying to put them in a political assembly.

The Chairman of the Federal Reserve, Jay Powell, appointed by President Trump, said last week that we are looking at the worst recession since World War II. Yesterday, Mr. Powell warned that layoffs would continue for several months and that unemployment could reach 20 or even 25 percent. He said:

If we let people be out of work for long periods of time, if we let businesses fail unnecessarily, waves of them, there'll be longer term damage to the economy. The recovery will be slower. The good news is we can avoid that by providing more support now.