

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.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

TAXPAYER FIRST ACT OF 2019—MOTION TO PROCEED—Resumed

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to H.R. 1957, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 75, H.R. 1957, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to modernize and improve the Internal Revenue Service, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

POLICE DEPARTMENTS

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, as I begin this morning, I would like to just briefly comment on the outlandish idea of dismantling police departments that has seen substantial coverage in recent days. While there are exceptions, the vast majority of our Nation's police officers are men and women of character who care deeply about protecting everyone in their communities, and they provide an essential service—a service that we cannot do without.

The idea that any city can exist without a police force is so absurd that it is difficult to believe anyone is seriously discussing it. We absolutely need to look at policies at the State, local, and Federal levels to ensure that we are holding police officers to the highest standards, and I hope we will be having serious bipartisan discussions on these issues in the coming weeks.

I know at least one Senate Republican has already introduced legislation to require law enforcement agencies to report the use of lethal force. But bipartisan discussions will not be forwarded by extreme and irresponsible proposals like abolishing the police departments that help protect our communities. I hope that such proposals will not gain any traction here in the U.S. Senate.

BUSINESS BEFORE THE SENATE

Madam President, we are very busy—hard at work—here in the Senate. Our main business on the floor this week will be the Great American Outdoors Act, legislation crafted by Senators DAINES and GARDNER and others, that will help address the significant maintenance backlog in our national parks, among other things.

Out of the limelight, Senators will also be discussing how best to respond

at the Federal level to the tragedy of George Floyd's killing.

Responding to the coronavirus continues to be at the top of our agenda. Right now, we are focused on monitoring the implementation of the \$2.4 trillion that Congress has provided so that we can identify what more we need to do to fight this virus.

Our committees play a leading role in this, and they have kept up a steady stream of hearings examining implementation and identifying next steps.

This week, we have no fewer than eight—eight—committee hearings on various aspects of the COVID crisis, including unemployment insurance, a Senate Finance Committee hearing later today that I will be participating in, reopening schools, and the Federal Government's procurement and distribution strategies.

The Democratic leader has spent a lot of time on the floor lately, complaining about what is happening in the Senate. He is, apparently, not happy that we are in session, and he claims we are not doing anything on the coronavirus.

Well, on the first point, I would just like to say that the majority leader brought the Senate back into session because we have responsibilities that we need to fulfill. One of the issues that we have to respond to, as a matter of our constitutional obligation, is the issue of dealing with nominations, both to judicial and executive branches of our government. We continue to have to do that.

There are important vacancies that we need to fill, some important national security vacancies, judicial vacancies. Last week, we confirmed the inspector general for the pandemic, somebody who was confirmed by a 75-to-15 vote.

Now, it is possible that we could do those and not be here. The Democratic leader has said on various occasions he doesn't know why we are here doing these types of nominations. Well, the reason we are here doing these types of nominations is that they insist on it.

Even in cases where the nominee has broad bipartisan support—in some cases, overwhelming support—we continue to have to stay here and go through the procedural roadblocks that Democrats throw up to getting these nominees across the finish line.

In fact, if you look at the historical context of nominations, we are living in unprecedented times. The Democrats have filibustered now—totaled—314 nominees that President Trump has put forward. For all of the previous Presidents combined—all of the previous Presidents combined in our Nation's history—only on 244 occasions did cloture have to be invoked to shut down a filibuster on nominees.

Think about that. In the first 3½ years of President Trump's term, we now have had 314 nominees—judicial or executive—filibustered. In the rest of the history of the U.S. Senate, even if you go back and say that the advent of

the filibuster is only in the last half century or so. Think about that: 244 times, throughout all of the Presidencies combined—combined—in our history, but this President has seen his nominees filibustered 314 times.

So if the Democratic leader wants to know why we are here doing nominees, that is why. We have to. It is our job. It is our constitutional responsibility. If the minority continues to make it as difficult as they have and continues to filibuster and force the leader to file cloture on all these nominees, we have to be here to vote. That is our job, and that is why we are here.

Of course, there is also the work, as I said, of responding to the coronavirus. There is also work we have to do that doesn't stop just because there is a pandemic.

If you look at the Paycheck Protection Program, when it ran out of money, it took way too long to convince Democrats to do something as simple as appropriate more funding for pandemic-stricken small businesses.

Funding our government, protecting our Nation, making sure these important positions in the government, as I mentioned, are filled—we just can't skip those things because of the coronavirus, and they have made it increasingly difficult—virtually impossible—for us to do any of this by unanimous consent while the Senate was out of session.

As for the Democratic leader's charge that the Senate hasn't been doing anything on coronavirus, as I pointed out, that is just a simply ridiculous charge to make. Coronavirus has been at the forefront of the Senate activity since we returned in May.

Our committees have held a constant stream of hearings examining implementation of the coronavirus assistance that we have already passed and looking forward to what will be needed in the future.

As I mentioned, last week, we confirmed the nomination of Brian D. Miller to be Special Inspector General for Pandemic Recovery at the Treasury Department, a key position with responsibility for ensuring the coronavirus funding is spent properly.

We also passed last week legislation to update the Paycheck Protection Program to give additional flexibility to small businesses. Clearly—clearly—the Senate has been making coronavirus a priority.

I would argue that much of what we have already done is having the desired result. The jobs numbers that came out last week are encouraging. Obviously, we have a lot of work to do. We have to keep it in perspective. It is no time to be spiking the football. But those job numbers were encouraging.

I think one of the reasons we had those strong numbers is because we have a very resilient economy, No. 1, and, No. 2, because of policies we have put in place—tax and regulatory policies that have encouraged businesses to invest, consumers to spend.