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Senate

The Senate met at 10 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.

Gracious God, empower our lawmakers to grow in grace. Make them gentle yet brave, confident yet humble, wise yet dependent on Your guidance. Lord, give them the wisdom to cultivate a faith that perseveres, keeping them from growing weary in doing what is right. Strengthen their ability to see among their colleagues Your divine image. May our Senators increase in favor with You and humanity. Fill them with a passion to live for Your glory.

We praise You for being our helper, and we desire to magnify Your Holy 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. LOEFFLER). The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for 1 minute in morning business.

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

MULTIEMPLOYER PENSION SYSTEM

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, quite often in our newspapers, you can read about a lot of city and State pension funds that are in trouble. There is one at the national level we have to deal with, so today I speak about the multiemployer pension system problems and the need for reform.

According to the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation's annual projections—and those reports were released last week—there is a very big need for reform. That is as important as ever and getting more important every day.

The report estimates that the Multiemployer Insurance Program will become insolvent in 2026. That is a year later than predicted last year, so people might feel a little more comfort, but that is only because we gave relief last year to the mineworkers' plan. What is worse is that insolvency will come at the same time that the Central States Pension Fund will become insolvent, then creating an even bigger strain on the PBGC's insurance fund.

Reaching a bipartisan reform agreement continues to be critically important. I am very encouraged by recent indications from my Democratic colleagues that they are interested in working with us to find a solution—a solution that will strengthen this important part of our retirement system while ensuring that taxpayers aren't left holding the bag again in the future.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam 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.

JUDICIAL NOMINATIONS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, 2 days ago, the Democratic leader threatened that if the Senate majority

dares to play by the rules and behave like a majority, it would mean “the end of this supposedly great deliberative body”—“the end of this supposedly great deliberative body.”

Yesterday, we learned what he meant. We saw important Senate business hurt by what amounted to a temper tantrum. For some reason, the Democratic leader decided to vent his frustration by blocking the Intelligence Committee—listen to this—from holding a bipartisan counterintelligence hearing—by blocking the Intelligence Committee from holding a bipartisan counterintelligence hearing.

The committee was set to hear from Bill Evanina, the Director of the National Counterintelligence and Security Center. This is the Nation's top counterintelligence official. Among other things, he works directly on protecting our elections and our politics from foreign interference. That is his job. They were going to hear from him.

This is the same Democratic leader who declared a few weeks ago that if the Intelligence Committee did not stay close to Congress on election security, it would be “an abdication of [their] duty . . . to protect our democracy.” Just last week, he wrote me a letter saying election security had to be “above partisan politics.” But now the Democratic leader's temper is more important. He denied Chairman RUBIO routine permission for the bipartisan committee to meet. He said: “[W]e won't have business as usual here in the Senate.”

Today, both the Intelligence Committee and the Armed Services Committee are scheduled to meet. They are set to speak with top intelligence and military officials about election security. I guess we will find out whether the Democratic leader's embarrassing theatrics were just a 1-day matinee or whether he means to make this a series.

Our bipartisan committees have a great deal of work to do to safeguard

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



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