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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal God, every good and perfect gift comes from You alone, for with You there is no variation or shadow of turning. Help us to remember that the function of prayer is not to influence You, Almighty God, but to change us. We, therefore, do not pray for an easy life but for the strength to endure a difficult one.

Give our Senators the wisdom to trust You in the small things, realizing that faithfulness with the least prepares them for fidelity with the much. May they trust You to do what is best for America in good times and in bad. May we place our hope in You and never forget how You have sustained us in the past.

We pray in Your sacred 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.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COTTON). The majority leader is recognized.

CONTINUING RESOLUTION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, Senators have been continuing their work across the aisle to reach an agreement on a continuing resolution that will help keep Americans safer from Zika, provide critical funding for veterans, and keep the government open.

I have been encouraged by the progress that we have made so far, and I hope to see it continue as we work toward a final bill which will extend through December 9 at last year's enacted level.

We all know how important the measure is. So let's keep working and get this done.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

THE REPUBLICAN-LED SENATE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the Republican-led Senate recently returned from the longest summer recess in more than a half a century. It is depicted here in the chart I wish to share with my colleagues. The black lines are when we are not working. Where there are not black lines is when we work, keeping in mind that many of our work days are not the work days of the people we represent. Some work days are 3 or 4 hours at the most.

The Republican Senate just simply doesn't work. The chart represents the fewest working days since 1956. Our country has grown since then. But here it is. A picture is worth a thousand words. I won't say a thousand words this morning, but I will say a few more things.

We are here today when the Republican-led Senate is on track to work fewer days in 2016 than in any year since 1956, when I was in high school. Republicans owe the taxpayers who fund their paychecks an apology—and they really do—for showing up to work fewer days this year than any Senate in all those many decades.

One would think the Republicans would be embarrassed by their indolence—but apparently not. Instead of apologizing for their absenteeism, Republicans are demanding even more time off.

Today I read in the newspaper—there are news accounts all over the country—that Republicans are whining about being asked to show up to do their jobs. They are asking for more weeks of recess. They are saying that Democrats are holding up what we are doing in Congress—how about that.

We are so far down the road here that not much can be done because we are in what we call postcloture procedure in almost everything we do around here. We are going to vote in just a few hours, and it will be another time when we can't do anything because we are postcloture. But that is the calendar the Republican leader set. We didn't. That is the calendar we should stick to, I guess, is what we are being told. Let's black off a few more days. It is scary, but that is what they want. If we take more time off, the Senate will not have just worked fewer days in any year since 1956, but we may have to go back further in history to find a Senate that worked as few days as this one—a long time back.

So I have a short answer for the Republicans who complain about being asked to earn their paychecks. Cry us all a river. Stop complaining about not having enough time off.

People out there who are watching this work different kinds of jobs. Some are retired, but they worked. They know what it is like to work. They never gave themselves extra weeks of vacation whenever they felt like it and neither should Senate Republicans.

DONALD TRUMP

Mr. REID. Mr. President, working people in our great country are tired of being ripped off by really rich people—some who are billionaires and some who claim they are billionaires. During the financial crisis, Wall Street took

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

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Main Street to the cleaners. Oh, did it hurt the State of Nevada—all of Nevada: Reno, Las Vegas—and it clobbered rural Nevada. American families lost their savings, their livelihoods, and their businesses because of the greed of a few. The last thing the American people want or need is a President who will run another financial scam on each of them.

If elected, Donald Trump would be the scammer in chief. Trump is a fraud. That is the word that I chose. He was born with an inheritance, but he lost his daddy's wealth. That is why Donald Trump won't release his tax returns. That is certainly one of the reasons, of course. He is not worth nearly as much as he claims to be. That is the secret he doesn't want anyone to know. He wants everyone to think he is the big, rich, rich man.

We know that Trump lies about his money. I am not making that up. He once admitted he assesses his net worth on a whim. This is what he said during one of his many, many depositions, which is a court proceeding where you gather evidence, and he has appeared before many for his depositions. This is what he said on one occasion in his many sworn statements. I keep stressing that this is one of a multitude of lawsuits to which he has been a party. This is Donald Trump talking: ''My net worth fluctuates, and it goes up and down with markets and with attitudes and with feelings, even my own feelings.''

Simply put, Trump is faking his net worth because he doesn't want us to know that he is not a good businessman and he is not as rich as he would have us believe.

Donald Trump's business record speaks for itself. He has ruined company after company, hotel after hotel. Over the last couple of decades, we know of at least six of his companies that have gone into bankruptcy. There are Trump's other business ventures, such as Trump Steaks. Yes, that was really one—Trump Steaks, those things you eat. There was Trump Magazine, those things you read, and Trump University, those places where you are supposed to get educated. They were all flops.

Trump claims to be a titan in the real estate industry, but the Washington Post has reported that he doesn't crack the list of major real estate buyers in New York City, let alone the country.

Earlier this year, the New York Times reported that Trump has such a bad business reputation that banks do not wish to lend him money.

In lieu of real business success, Donald Trump resorts to scams like Trump University. That is a doozy, but that is one of the best scams. Now, with Trump University, he ripped off everyone from students interested in real estate to retirees looking to invest their savings. Trump University is under investigation by the New York Office of the Attorney General, and he is the defendant in two other class action lawsuits. Why? Because he cheated people. He cheated them.

Litigation is nothing new to Donald Trump. Over the last decade and a half, Trump and his companies have been sued in Federal court 72 times. That doesn't take into consideration the many times he has been sued in State courts. There have been 72 Federal cases and many more times in State courts. But Trump, being the flimflammer that he is, just moves on to another scheme.

He even cheats charities. He has a charity—using a broad definition of a ''charity''—called the Trump Foundation. Trump started his charity because he is desperate to get invited to fancy parties and be seen with people who give their own money. He seeks acceptance among the wealthy. Since 2008, Trump has not donated a single penny to his own charity, the Trump Foundation. Does he have the money to donate? Well, he says he should, but he doesn't. Americans are far more generous, even though they are of modest means, but they contribute generously to charities every day—not the Donald. No, instead, he goes to other individuals and charities and asks them to donate to his foundation.

The Trump Foundation isn't as much of a charity as it is Donald Trump's personal ATM machine. Trump uses the money he gets from other charities to buy himself gifts. Four years ago, Trump paid $12,000 of charity resources to buy a football helmet signed by Tim Tebow. Tim Tebow, I am sure, is a fine man. His college career was terrific. He is a Heisman award winner. His professional career wasn't so good, but everything I know about the man indicates he is a good person. He is now 29 years old, and with his great physical attributes, he is trying baseball. He hasn't played baseball since he was in high school, but he hit almost .500 his last year in high school, and I hope he does well.

Here is the deal with the helmet. If Trump wants to buy Tim Tebow's helmet or Willie Mays' bat or Ernie Banks' glove—whatever he wants to buy—that is his right. But shouldn't he use his own money? Not Donald Trump—no, he didn't use his money to buy Tim Tebow's helmet. He didn't use his checkbook to buy that memorabilia. Instead, he used the Trump Foundation charity money—money that was supposed to be given to somebody that needed help. So for $12,000, a big shot was bidding on a helmet, not with his own money but with the charity's money.

The Internal Revenue Service calls this sort of thing self-dealing. Self-dealing is when a person spends charity money on themself. It is against the law. It is illegal. But Trump doesn't care about what the law is. If he doesn't have the money himself, which obviously he doesn't, then he uses other people's money—other people's money that is put into his charity, and he spends it on himself. This is who the Republicans want to be our President. This is who Republicans—Leader MCCONNELL and Speaker RYAN want this man to prepare a budget for our country? Trump can't be trusted with his own charity. Are we supposed to believe he can manage the Nation's Treasury or provide money for our armed services or for Homeland Security?

This is a man who uses charities to bilk even police officers. In 2009, Donald Trump asked the Charles Evans Foundation for a donation to his charity, the Trump Foundation. Trump told them he needed the money to donate to the Palm Beach, FL, Police Foundation. They gave Trump's charity $150,000. Donald Trump took that money and gave it to the Palm Beach Police Foundation. He didn't match it with a dime of his own. Trump took the Charles Evans Foundation money, and he donated it as if it were his own.

Here is where the story gets even more absurd—even worse. What kind of man is this person running for President? Well, here is a slight indication. When the Palm Beach Police Foundation wanted to use Trump's South Florida resort to honor him for his gift—remember, the gift was from somebody else, but he claimed credit for it—Trump charged them for the event, for the room, and for the food. It is estimated that the Palm Beach Police Foundation paid Trump and his hotel operation $200,000 to honor himself.

Donald Trump ran a hustle on many different charities and netted his resort money, and he didn't spend a penny of his own money along the way.

Trump never worries about being caught because he financially rewards the people who would investigate the racket he perpetuates. In 2013, the attorney general of Florida, Pam Bondi, announced she was joining the New York investigation into Trump University. Four days after announcing the probe, Donald Trump sent $25,000 to her campaign. The attorney general's office announced almost immediately that it would not be investigating Trump University and would not join with the State of New York. Guess what money Trump used to persuade the attorney general to change her mind. Was it his money? Oh, no. Was it money from his charity? You got it. Of course, that is illegal, but he did it anyway and got credit from the attorney general of Florida.

How can Senator MCCONNELL and Speaker RYAN continue to endorse this man? How can Republicans close their eyes to the fact that this swindler is running for President and he is ripping off the American people and our government?

This Republican Congress has spent millions of your tax dollars on political hit jobs masquerading as investigations. They have spent untold amounts of money on Benghazi, on emails, and they found nothing, of course—zero—and they have acknowledged that.

So I have another job for them. Why don't they investigate Donald Trump? They can do it quickly. They are all set to do this. They don't mind spending taxpayer dollars. All these investigations of the Clinton operation have always been taxpayer dollars. They should take a cue from the attorney general of the State of New York and hold Trump accountable for scamming charities, the IRS, and the American people.

Donald Trump desperately wants people to believe that he is a brilliant, rich, rich businessman. In reality he is a silver-spoon-toting fraud who would never make it in the real world without his father's money. That is why Trump's entire business career has been one scam after another, such as in Atlantic City where he cheated everybody and got rich at the expense of others. If there is one reason Atlantic City has gone downhill—and it has—it is Donald Trump.

He is always looking for a mark, some victim for one of his scams, because he is incapable of making money honestly. Now our country is Trump's next target. He wants this to be the biggest payoff ever.

Mr. President, I think it is time to announce the business of the day.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

LEGISLATIVE BRANCH APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2017—MOTION TO PROCEED

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to H.R. 5325, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 516, H.R. 5325, a bill making appropriations for the Legislative Branch for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2017, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The assistant Democratic leader.

ZIKA VIRUS FUNDING

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I can still recall the first briefing I had as a Member of Congress on something called HIV/AIDS. I didn't know much about it. I heard the words, but I didn't understand them until this briefing brought to mind and brought to light the serious threat this was to the health of thousands of people in the United States and around the world. It was a frightening moment. The information we received led us to believe quite honestly that this was the public health crisis of our time.

There was a response that I was surprised by. Despite all the controversy around all the values and issues, President Ronald Reagan and his Surgeon General Koop stepped forward and showed real leadership.

Some argued that President Reagan waited too long. I am going to put that argument aside. The day came when the Surgeon General sent a letter to every American family telling them the threat of this public health crisis. It was the right thing to do. We dealt with it in an honest, forthright way. We appropriated massive amounts of money for treatment research, and we have come a long way in saving the lives of many who were threatened by this deadly disease.

It is rare when a President of the United States steps up and says to the American people: We have a public health crisis. Because it is so rare, we should take it very seriously.

In February of this year, President Obama made that plea to Congress about a new public health crisis involving the Zika infection. Zika, of course, is borne by mosquitoes. There is evidence in countries around the world that when these mosquitoes bite someone and infect them, it has a negative health consequence, particularly on pregnant women and the babies they carry.

President Obama came to Congress in February of this year and in a rare moment announced that we had an emergency, a public health crisis that needed to be addressed. He asked for $1.9 billion to eradicate the mosquitoes and also to develop a vaccine to protect innocent Americans.

I took that seriously. Unfortunately, the Republican leadership in Congress did not. It wasn't until May, some 3 months later, that the Senate passed a response to the President's request for this public health emergency called Zika. We passed a bill that had about $1.1 billion in it—not what the President asked for but a substantial investment toward his goal of protecting America and developing a vaccine, and we passed it with an overwhelming bipartisan vote. Some 89 Senators from both parties voted for it in May of this year. That, of course, was 4 months ago.

What happened after the Senate with a strong bipartisan vote responded to the President's request for emergency funding for a public health crisis involving Zika? What happened to this bill after it passed the Senate? It went to the House of Representatives. Unfortunately, that is where it took a bad turn. Instead of passing the obvious bipartisan bill in response to the President, the House Republicans insisted on delaying it further and adding provisions that were politically controversial and really were unnecessary to our goal of protecting America from this crisis.

They added a provision that said that if you were a woman seeking family planning so that your pregnancy was not compromised by the Zika virus, you could not use the Planned Parenthood agencies for those family planning consultations. Why would they pick Planned Parenthood? Because the Republican Party is at war with Planned Parenthood. They are willing to stop even their family planning functions.

Two million American women went to Planned Parenthood last year. They count on them for professional services they can trust and afford. The Republicans want to close it down. They have voted repeatedly to do that. So they chose this Zika emergency public health crisis bill to do that again.

They took $500 million slated for the Veterans' Administration to expedite the consideration of claims by our veterans and eliminated that money in the VA—put it toward the Zika virus.

Third, they decided to suspend the authority of the Environmental Protection Agency when it came to monitoring and overseeing the chemicals that would be sprayed to kill these mosquitoes.

Finally, in the ultimate political act, they put in a provision that eliminated the prohibition against displaying a Confederate flag at a U.S. military cemetery. That is what happens when legislation that starts off as very simple, pointed, and direct runs amok and becomes a political freighter, carrying all of these issues.

That is what happened and, of course, the Republicans in the House knew what would follow. The bill would run into resistance, and the Senate would be bogged down. Instead of taking the simple funding bill the Senate passed overwhelmingly with a bipartisan vote, the Republicans complicated the situation dramatically and brought the whole conversation to a stop.

So here we are today. The President's request was in February; we are now in September. Congress has yet to send the President the resources he asked for. At what cost? Well, we know the cost. At this point we estimate that by the end of the year in Puerto Rico, 25 percent of the people on that island will be infected with the Zika virus, including presently about 1,000 women in Puerto Rico. We know that they are in danger and that the babies they give birth to will have serious life-threatening birth defects because of that infection—an infection that might have been slowed down or even avoided had this Congress under Republican control responded to President Obama's request for emergency public health funding for this Zika epidemic.

As of last week there were 20,870 reported cases of Zika in the United States and its territories. That included 1,897 pregnant women, and in Illinois there are 70 of these women. We estimate about 700 or 800 women in America in the continental United States have been infected by this virus, with another 1,000, as I mentioned, in Puerto Rico.

If we had responded quickly in a responsible bipartisan way when the President made his request, I don't know whether some of these families and women and their babies could have been spared. We will never know, but