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Senate

The Senate met at 10:01 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable TOM COTTON, a Senator from the State of Arkansas.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Almighty God, You continue to reveal Your truth to those who will listen. Increase the devotion of our Senators to You as they strive to faithfully follow Your precepts. May love provide the motivation for their service to You and country.

Lord, inspire them to patiently wait for the unfolding of Your wise, loving, and powerful providence, refusing to become weary in doing what is right. Let Your peace be within their hearts as You calm their fears. Soothe their minds with the knowledge of Your providential care. May they encourage one another and build each other up.

We pray in Your sacred 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. HATCH).

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, September 13, 2017.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby

appoint the Honorable TOM COTTON, a Senator from the State of Arkansas, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ORRIN G. HATCH,
President pro tempore.

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER.

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

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION BILL

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, the National Defense Authorization Act is one of the most important pieces of legislation to come before the Senate each and every year. It is, after all, the measure that authorizes the resources, the capabilities, and the pay and benefits that our men and women in uniform need to perform their mission. It is always worth remembering that our country fields an all-volunteer force. We owe a special obligation to all those who volunteer to fight on behalf of each and every one of us.

This year the bill, thanks to the good work of the Armed Services Committee under the leadership of Chairman MCCAIN and Ranking Member REED, passed out of committee with unanimous bipartisan support. It recommends a national defense level of authorization that will allow the Department of Defense to begin to rebuild our military and deliver a well-deserved pay raise to our men and women in uniform. That is especially important today. Our Nation faces a myriad of challenges around the world from both state actors and terror organizations that threaten American national security. These growing pressures require that our forces have the training and resources they need to combat those challenges and win.

Yet, due to a combination of the last administration's actions and the harmful consequences of sequestration, our military does not have the resources it needs to address the many global challenges before us in either a comprehensive or responsible way. We have to keep faith with the force. So we have to correct this situation, and doing so means equipping our servicemembers with the weapons and the training they need to sufficiently defeat these threats.

As I said yesterday, this spring's government funding bill made an important down payment toward rebuilding our forces, and the NDAA bill before us can build upon that progress further. As we consider the NDAA, I remain firmly committed to the men and women in the Armed Forces, including to those stationed in my home State.

I am proud to represent three Army installations and the Kentucky Air and Army National Guard. One of these installations, Fort Campbell in Christian County, is home to the 101st Airborne Division, the 5th Special Forces Group, and the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment.

Since World War II, the 101st Airborne Division has responded to threats around the globe, including, most recently, during multiple deployments in Afghanistan and Iraq. This highly decorated unit, known as the Screaming Eagles, is contributing to keeping our Nation and national interests secure.

The NDAA will authorize the resources and capabilities to ensure that the troops at Fort Campbell, as part of the joint force, are prepared to continue responding to threats against our Nation.

Another Kentucky military installation is Fort Knox. With a distinguished history during both World Wars, Fort Knox has remained an essential Army facility with numerous responsibilities. Home to the Army's Cadet Command, Fort Knox hosts about 10,000 ROTC cadets every summer for Cadet Summer

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



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