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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.

Our Father in Heaven, we trust You to direct our lives. You are holy, ruling in the Heavens.

Keep our lawmakers faithful to You as You use them to accomplish Your purposes. May they hear the groans of the poor, the cries of the helpless, and the moans of the oppressed.

Help our Senators to cause justice to roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream. Give them the wisdom to find in You a refuge in turbulent times, remembering that You will never abandon those who seek You. Grant them the greatness of being on Your side, doing Your will on Earth, even as it is done in Heaven.

We pray in Your merciful 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.

TAX CUTS AND JOBS ACT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask that the Chair lay before the Senate a message from the House of Representatives.

The Presiding Officer laid before the Senate the following message from the House of Representatives:

Resolved, That the House disagree to the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 1) entitled "An Act to provide for reconciliation pursuant to titles II and V of the concurrent resolution on the budget for fiscal year 2018," and ask a conference with the Senate on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses thereon.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, last week, Senators answered the call of our constituents by voting to overhaul our complex and outdated Federal Tax Code.

We seized the opportunity to spur economic growth, to help create jobs right here at home, and to take more money out of Washington's pocket and put more money into the pockets of hard-working American families.

Our bill also helps to provide for the country's energy security by further developing Alaska's oil and gas potential in an environmentally responsible way, and it delivers relief to low- and middle-income Americans by repealing ObamaCare's individual mandate tax.

I would like to once again thank every one of my colleagues who supported this once-in-a-generation effort to make our Tax Code work for the middle class and to help them get ahead.

Since the beginning of this process, we said that tax reform would be done through regular order and an open process. That is exactly what has happened.

Under Chairman HATCH's leadership, the Senate Finance Committee hosted dozens of hearings over multiple years and a full committee markup. Members on both sides of the aisle had a chance to offer amendments both in committee and on the floor. We considered numerous amendments and, when it came time to vote, the Senate approved the bill. This has been a years-long process to deliver tax reform. We have come a long way, and we still have more work ahead of us.

Earlier this week, our colleagues in the House voted to work with Members of the Senate to produce a final bill to

send to the President's desk. Later today, the Senate will do the same. We will vote to join our colleagues in a conference to finish our work on tax reform. The American people deserve taxes that are lower, simpler, and fairer. By voting for a conference, we will be one step closer to getting it done.

I look forward to voting to send our legislation to conference later today.

FUNDING THE GOVERNMENT

Mr. President, now on another matter, with the cooperation of our colleagues, Congress will pass a short-term continuing resolution before the end of the week. Once the House passes a continuing resolution, the Senate will have a chance to consider it as well.

By sending this short-term funding provision to the President for his signature, we will ensure that the government remains open while bipartisan discussions continue with our colleagues in Congress and the White House on a long-term funding solution.

In the meantime, it is important to recognize that this bill doesn't have any contentious provisions. We should all support it. A vote for this short-term measure will help maintain our military, it will continue the important work of Federal agencies, and it will provide States with certainty to continue funding the Children's Health Insurance Program until a bipartisan CHIP reauthorization agreement is finalized.

When the House sends us the short-term continuing resolution later this week, I urge all of my colleagues to join me in voting for it. That way, we can continue the critical operations of the Federal Government while we work to finalize a long-term solution.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

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



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