



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 115th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 163

WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2017

No. 204

Senate

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of James C. Ho, of Texas, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Fifth Circuit.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, today the Senate will continue another historic week confirming more of President Trump's impressive judicial nominees to the Federal bench—Steven Grasz, confirmed; Don Willett, confirmed. And soon we will add James Ho to the list by confirming him to serve on the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals.

He is an exceptionally well-qualified nominee whose career in both public service and the private sector has garnered respect from both sides of the aisle. The former Democratic mayor of Dallas supported his nomination, calling him “among the most brilliant appellate lawyers in the United States.”

When we vote to confirm Mr. Ho, we will be adding another fair and impartial judge to the Federal bench, and by doing so, the Senate will take another important step to ensure that the Federal judiciary fulfills its proper role in our constitutional system. Each of them will be an asset to our Nation's courts.

Under Chairman GRASSLEY's leadership, the Senate Judiciary Committee has done outstanding work to move these judicial nominees to the floor. I am grateful for his efforts, and I urge all of my colleagues to join me in voting to confirm Mr. Ho soon.

FUNDING OUR MILITARY

Mr. President, on another matter, our Nation faces a myriad of threats

from around the globe, and it is the Senate's responsibility to provide the service chiefs with the resources to train and equip our warfighters and to provide them with the resources they need to keep us safe.

The diverse challenges posed by Iran, China, Russia, North Korea, ISIL, al-Qaida, and its affiliates span the spectrum of warfighting, and our force must be trained and prepared to operate on sea, air, land, and in cyber space. These challenges were only compounded by the Obama administration's focus on reducing the size of our conventional force, withdrawing our forward presence, and placing an unrealistic reliance upon allies and Special Operations forces.

In stark contrast to the previous administration, this Republican-led Congress and the Trump administration have taken the initial steps to rebuild our military. We are working to ensure that the needs of the force are met and our servicemembers have the tools and training necessary to fulfill their missions.

In our ongoing discussions surrounding government funding, we must continue to prioritize our Nation's men and women in uniform. It is illogical for this Senate to repeatedly vote to pass National Defense Authorization Acts at one level of authority and not meet that commitment with the necessary appropriations act; and this funding cannot be held hostage to the Obama-era demand that increases in defense funding be matched by equal increases in nondefense spending. Congress ignored that demand earlier this year, and we must do it again now.

The reason is simple: Under the Budget Control Act, the Department of Defense has received a disproportionate funding cut—and will again if Congress fails to come to an agreement. That type of blow would unacceptably diminish our military's readiness and damage our national security.

I hope that Members can work together to provide the necessary funds

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.

O Lord our God, we are grateful for Your marvelous works and power. Keep us from becoming weary in doing what is right, as You remind us that a harvest of blessings is certain. Give strength to our lawmakers and bless them with Your peace. We praise You that You are the strength of our lives and we need not fear for the future. As You guide our Senators with Your wisdom, create in them a hunger and thirst for righteousness, preparing them to be filled with Your Divine nourishment. Lord, thank You for not withholding blessings from those who walk upright.

We pray in Your great 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.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. STRANGE). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

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



Printed on recycled paper.

S8017