

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

WELCOMING NEW SENATORS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, as we open the 2nd session of the 115th Congress, I am pleased to welcome my colleagues back to the Chamber.

I would like to extend a particular welcome to our two new Senators, who were just sworn in. First, Senator DOUG JONES of Alabama will have big shoes to fill. His State has sent very distinguished legislators to Washington, including our Attorney General, Jeff Sessions. Senator JONES brings a background in law enforcement, having served as a Federal prosecutor in the Northern District of Alabama. We welcome him.

We also welcome Senator TINA SMITH. For 3 years, she has served the people of Minnesota as their Lieutenant Governor. Now she will join Senator KLOBUCHAR in representing them here in the Senate.

I congratulate both of these new Senators. I look forward to working with them in the months ahead to make bipartisan progress and to find common ground on behalf of the American people.

FUNDING THE GOVERNMENT

Mr. McCONNELL. The Senate will need to tackle a number of important issues this year. It is my sincere hope that we can do so in a renewed spirit of comity, collegiality, and bipartisanship. I know that colleagues on both sides of the aisle share this hope, and it is urgent that we make it a reality. Congress must reach a spending agreement by January 19 to ensure uninterrupted funding for the Federal Government.

Among several key priorities, it is vital that our agreement provide sufficient resources for our all-volunteer Armed Forces. Under the Budget Control Act, America's military has been stretched thin by disproportionate cuts that have harmed our combat readiness. Since 2013, defense cuts have outpaced domestic spending cuts by \$85 billion. I am going to say that again: Since fiscal year 2013, defense cuts have outpaced domestic spending cuts by \$85 billion. To fix this, we need to set aside the arbitrary notion that new defense spending be matched equally by new nondefense spending. There is no reason why funding for our national security and our servicemembers should be limited by an arbitrary political formula that bears no relationship to actual need.

So let's come together across the aisle and construct a funding agreement that gives our men and women in uniform the tools and the training they need.

IRAN

Mr. McCONNELL. Now, on another matter, Mr. President, over the last week, one of the often overlooked costs of Iran's regional aggression has come to light. Iranians have taken to the streets in protest, demanding that Supreme Leader Khamenei and President Rouhani do more to expand the domestic economy. Iran's actions in Yemen, Syria, and Iraq and its support for proxies such as Hezbollah have diverted resources away from economic reform and investment. While the government has prioritized payments to the military and security elites and clerical institutions, the people throughout Iran have suffered. Now their discontent is fully evident.

As part of our overall strategy toward Iran, which should be focused on ending Iran's malign activities across the Middle East, we should hold accountable any officials behind a crack-down on these protests. The coming days will be noteworthy as we wait to see if hardliners use these protests as an excuse to promote more aggressive policies against the West and to tighten their grip further on the country and its economy.

TRIBUTE TO ORRIN HATCH

Mr. McCONNELL. Now, on one final matter, Mr. President, yesterday a very distinguished Senator announced his intention to retire at the end of this Congress. For more than 40 years, Senator ORRIN HATCH has served the people of Utah in this body. He is not only our President pro tempore, but, as we celebrated last year, Senator HATCH is also the longest serving Republican Senator in the history of the United States.

During this historic tenure, Senator HATCH has chaired three key committees. He has amassed deep expertise across all manner of policy issues, and he has built a truly remarkable resume of accomplishments on behalf of the American people.

Senator HATCH has defended our national security and our religious freedom. He has fought to protect Americans with disabilities and to shepherd fine judges onto our courts. Just last month, as Senate Finance Committee chairman, he played an integral role in passing the most significant tax reform law in more than 30 years.

Senator HATCH's colleagues here will be sorry to see him retire. I will miss his friendship, but I know his wife Elaine and his beloved family will be glad to welcome him home.

Fortunately, it is not yet time to say farewell. This institution and the American people will benefit greatly from the Senator's wisdom and famous work ethic for one more year before his retirement.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 2274

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I understand that there is a bill at the desk due for a second reading.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator is correct.

The clerk will read the bill by title for the second time.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2274) to provide for the compensation of Federal employees affected by lapses in appropriations.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, in order to place the bill on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I object to further proceedings.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection having been heard, the bill will be placed on the calendar.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

WELCOMING NEW SENATORS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, first, as we begin the 2nd session of the 115th Congress, I welcome all of my colleagues back from the holiday break and wish them a happy new year, and I wish our country a wonderful 2018. I was also very gratified to see two of the best former Vice Presidents we have ever had on the floor today for the ceremonies. I am glad to see former Senators Mondale and Biden—former Vice Presidents Mondale and Biden—as feisty and as strong as they have ever been and giving us their opinions.

It is also very exciting to welcome two new Members to this body who will be joining the Democratic caucus, TINA SMITH from Minnesota and DOUG JONES from Alabama. In joining this esteemed body, both bring a wealth of experience and individual passions.

Former Lieutenant Governor TINA SMITH brings with her several years of experience serving at the highest levels of State Government, where she focused on economic development and expanding access to rural broadband and affordable healthcare, issues she will continue to fight for here in the Senate. In that work, Governor Dayton praised her as "extremely intelligent, quick to learn and always open to hearing others' views." She was also dubbed the "velvet hammer" by the mayor of Minneapolis for her ability to work across the aisle but also to get tough when she needs to be. Those are precisely the kinds of qualities that make an effective Senator. The people of Minnesota are lucky to have Senator SMITH, and we look forward to welcoming her in our next caucus.

We also look forward to welcoming Senator DOUG JONES—the first Democrat from the State of Alabama in a quarter century. He, too, represents