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Senate

The Senate met at 3 p.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, You rule the raging of the sea. You are the giver of our lives, and we belong to You. Sustain our lawmakers with Your everlasting arms. Direct their actions as they seek to glorify You. Lord, surround them with Your gracious favor so they may more fully serve You faithfully. Deliver them from discord and disunity through the power of Your prevailing providence.

And, Lord, we thank You for the life, contributions, and legacy of our Assistant Parliamentarian, Michael Phillip Beaver. Sustain his loved ones and friends during this season of grief.

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. BLUNT). The majority leader is recognized.

REMEMBERING MICHAEL BEAVER

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I wish to pay respects to a member of the Senate family who tragically passed away last week. Michael Beaver was a talented attorney who served as the Senate's Assistant Parliamentarian.

That followed service as deputy legislative counsel for the State of California.

Michael was just 39 years old. He leaves behind his wife, Gilda, his two beloved sons, Bradley and Connor, his parents, and an extended family that mourns his loss. They are joined by Michael's colleagues here on the Senate staff, in the Secretary's office, and with the floor staff on both sides of the aisle and throughout our whole institution. The Senate's prayers are with all of Michael's family and friends at this immensely difficult hour.

NOMINATION OF KURT ENGELHARDT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, on a totally different matter, this week the Senate will consider another slate of extremely well-qualified nominees for seats on the Federal bench. A thoughtful, independent, and expert judiciary is a cornerstone of our constitutional order. It has been the case since the very beginning of our country.

Accordingly, the six circuit court nominees we will now consider have excellent reputations in the legal field and have demonstrated they understand the proper role of Federal judges in our government.

First up is Kurt Engelhardt, of Louisiana, the President's choice to serve on the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals. The Senate previously confirmed Judge Engelhardt by voice vote to the Federal trial bench in the Eastern District of Louisiana. Since then, he has only strengthened his reputation for fairness and thoughtfulness.

In the latest edition of the Almanac of the Federal Judiciary, his legal peers describe him as "very conscientious" and "fair and independent minded." The American Bar Association agrees. It awarded Judge Engelhardt its highest possible rating of "unanimously well qualified." I urge every

one of our colleagues to join me in voting to advance Judge Engelhardt's nomination later this afternoon.

TAX REFORM

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, on one final matter, in storefront windows across America, new signs are going up—signs that many communities haven't seen literally in years. Here is what the signs say: "Now Hiring." Just 16 months into the Trump administration and this Republican Congress, the percentage of American workers who are unemployed, underemployed, or have given up finding a job is already smaller than it ever was in any of the Obama years. In fact, it hasn't been this low since 2001. Let me say that again. Less unemployment, underemployment, and discouragement today than at any point in the last 17 years. Or we can look at how many Americans are receiving unemployment benefits. The answer is this: fewer today than at any time since—listen to this—1973.

We all know that these economic indicators can be noisy, but the big overall shift from the Obama era is impossible to deny. Republican policies have taken Washington's foot off the brake of the U.S. economy. We have rolled back a host of job-killing regulations. We have passed historic tax reform for middle-class families and job creators. These Republican policies have helped to unleash a dynamic, growing economy that is producing many more new jobs. It is putting the stagnation of the last decade literally to shame. That means sidelined workers get the chance to check back into the game. It means renewal is coming to so many small towns, small cities, and rural areas that had to sit and watch as Democratic policies funneled nearly all of the new wealth and new jobs into our Nation's biggest and bluest urban areas. It means higher wages, as local businesses are forced to compete again for the best workers.

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



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