



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 116th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 165

WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2019

No. 199

Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable CINDY HYDE-SMITH, a Senator from the State of Mississippi, a Senator from the State of Mississippi.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

God of grace and glory, on Your people, shower Your blessings. Be for us a shield and sure defense. Lord, as we live in this tangled world, give us the wisdom to keep our eyes on You.

Bless our Senators. Crown their deliberations with Your wisdom so that Your purposes will prevail. Lord, quicken in our lawmakers noble impulses as You sanctify their efforts with Your mercy and might.

Be merciful to us. Forgive our faults, and remember that we are but dust, like a wind that blows by and is gone. Lord, keep us from stumbling or slipping.

We pray in Your gracious 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. GRASSLEY).

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, December 12, 2019.

To the Senate:

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

appoint the Honorable CINDY HYDE-SMITH, a Senator from the State of Mississippi, to perform the duties of the Chair.

CHUCK GRASSLEY,
President pro tempore.

Mrs. HYDE-SMITH thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. 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 Aurelia Skipwith, of Indiana, to be Director of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

SENATE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I have spoken at length about the serious impact the Democrats' impeachment obsession has had on months' worth of important legislative priorities. For months, the Republicans have been calling for bipartisan solutions to the NDAA, to the appropriations process, and more, but only in the last couple of days, here in mid-De-

ember, have our Democratic colleagues gotten sufficiently serious about these must-pass bills.

In the meantime, while we have waited on the House Democrats to act, the Senate has made good use of our floor time to complete the American people's business with respect to nominations. Last week alone, the Senate confirmed two executive branch nominations and put eight impressive jurists in seats on Federal district courts.

This week, we have considered yet another slate of the President's well-qualified nominees. The Senate will consider today John Sullivan, of Maryland, to serve as Ambassador to the Russian Federation, Stephen Hahn, of Texas, to serve as Commissioner at the Food and Drug Administration, and Aurelia Skipwith, of Indiana, to be Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Already this week, we have confirmed two more outstanding jurists to the Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit—Patrick Bumatay, of California, and Lawrence VanDyke, of Nevada. Mr. Bumatay is a graduate of Yale and Harvard Law School. He clerked for the Eastern District of New York and the Tenth Circuit, practiced in the private sector, and served in a variety of roles with the Department of Justice. Mr. VanDyke graduated from Montana State University and Harvard Law School. His career has included a clerkship with the DC Circuit, time as a State solicitor general, and service as Deputy Assistant Attorney General at the Department of Justice. Both of these jurists are well qualified, and both have widespread respect from legal peers. Now they are the 49th and 50th circuit judges to have been nominated by President Trump and confirmed by the Senate in the last 3 years.

As I have said before, these kinds of milestones are emphatically not partisan achievements. It is not one party or the other that benefits when our

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



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