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## House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Friday, January 5, 2018, at 12 p.m.

## Senate

THURSDAY, JANUARY 4, 2018

The Senate met at 11 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable DAN SULLIVAN, a Senator from the State of Alaska.

### PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal God, the King of Glory, Your never failing providence sustains us.

Today, inspire our lawmakers with the music of Your wisdom, that they may bring hope, joy, and unity to our Nation and world. Remind our Senators that even in the darkness, You are a sure guide. Lord, energize them to strive to transform dark yesterdays into bright tomorrows.

And, Lord, in this new year, go before us to show us the way, behind us to press us forward, beside us to give us courage, above us to provide protection, and within us to give us Your wisdom and discernment.

We pray in Your loving 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. HATCH).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,  
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,  
Washington, DC, January 4, 2018.

*To the Senate:*

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable DAN SULLIVAN, a Senator from the State of Alaska, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ORRIN G. HATCH,  
President pro tempore.

Mr. SULLIVAN thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

### RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

### FUNDING THE GOVERNMENT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I spoke yesterday about the need to fund the Federal Government by January 19. Members in both parties, including leadership on both sides, have publicly stated their desire to approach this issue in a serious and collaborative manner, and those sentiments were renewed in a productive meeting we had yesterday. I am optimistic that we can begin 2018 with a bipartisan, 2-year funding agreement that meets several critically important objectives.

To begin with, any agreement must provide our Armed Forces with the re-

sources they need to fulfill their missions. That means setting aside the misguided notion that new defense spending needs to be matched dollar for dollar by new nondefense spending.

Some describe this notion as parity, but, of course, there was no parity at all in the damaging cuts that the Budget Control Act inflicted on our national security. Since fiscal year 2013, discretionary defense spending has been cut by \$85 billion more than nondefense spending.

That number has real consequences for the men and women in harm's way who serve our country. Last year, Secretary of Defense Mattis testified: "No enemy in the field has done more to harm the combat readiness of our military" than these self-inflicted budget reductions.

Nothing about this issue needs to be partisan. During the Obama administration, Defense Secretaries Panetta, Hagel, and Carter all similarly warned that sequestration cuts would handicap our men and women in uniform. Those were all Secretaries of Defense during the Obama administration. Unfortunately, at a time when our country faces a myriad of threats and strategic challenges around the globe, experts agree that this is exactly what has happened.

Congress has a golden opportunity to put aside political calculations and prioritize the actual needs of America's all-volunteer military. There is no reason that an arbitrary formula, which bears no relationship—none—to the real needs of our Armed Forces, should dictate the degree to which we fund them. Our men and women in uniform

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



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are doing their jobs. Our job is to give them the resources they require.

Funding our Armed Forces is not the only area that is ripe for productive, bipartisan negotiation. Last December, the Senate made progress moving toward a long-term reauthorization of the Children's Health Insurance Program. Unfortunately, though Senate Republicans were prepared and eager to move forward, we were not able to put that in the continuing resolution. Approximately 9 million children, including thousands in my home State of Kentucky, depend on CHIP for healthcare coverage. Their parents depend on it for financial security and for peace of mind. Instead of giving them a 5-year reauthorization in time for the holidays, partisan objections forced Congress to settle for a short-term patch.

This month we can set this right. I know colleagues on both sides of the aisle are eager to find a long-term solution—5 years, full reauthorization. Let's get this done for working families.

Furthermore, as Senators from both parties have stated, Congress should act now to provide relief for communities across the country that were devastated by disasters in 2017. Last year's hurricanes crippled Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands and dealt blows to communities from Florida to Texas. Wildfires caused serious damage across the Western United States. For many Americans in these areas, life is nowhere near back to normal. It is time to complete our work on the supplemental disaster relief legislation.

It is imperative that none of these urgent priorities be held hostage to our ongoing discussions around immigration policy. Senators with diverse viewpoints have been discussing how to address the unlawfully established DACA Program while also improving border security, interior enforcement, and addressing other important parts of our broken immigration system. As I have stated, if a compromise solution emerges that meets the President's conditions, it will be brought up for a vote in the Senate. In the meantime, let's continue productive negotiations and secure a bipartisan funding agreement.

#### MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—H.R. 4667

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

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 4667) making further supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2018, for disaster assistance for Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria, and calendar year 2017 wildfires, and for other purposes.

Mr. MCCONNELL. In order to place the bill on the calendar under the pro-

visions of rule XIV, I object to further proceedings.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection is heard.

The bill will be placed on the calendar.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

#### FUNDING THE GOVERNMENT

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, yesterday the four congressional leaders had a positive and productive meeting with Budget Director Mulvaney and representatives from the White House, including Mr. Short. It was a good first step, but there is a lot of work to do. Ultimately, the budget agreement must lift the spending caps with parity between defense and urgent domestic priorities, it must include disaster aid, a healthcare package, and an agreement to enshrine DACA protections alongside additional border security.

Like our Republican colleagues, Democrats want to make sure our men and women in uniform have the resources they need to do their jobs. There is not an argument about that, but we also want to make sure there are crucial investments in economic development and job creation here at home—programs that support the middle class and help it grow.

That includes a number of things, including funding needed for the opioid crisis. Life expectancy has gone down in America for the first time in years because of deaths from the opioid abuse by young people and middle-aged people. Are we just going to shrug our shoulders at that? There is a lot more to do. It affects rural areas, urban areas, and suburban areas. There have been 63,000 Americans who have died from drug overdoses. Those are deaths on the battlefield, in a sense, as well—often the flower of our youth, the prime of America, so many in rural areas. These are kids who were full of potential. Many were veterans dealing with the wounds of war. They served our country and didn't get what they needed when they came home.

I had a father cry in my arms. His son had been grappling with opioids. Finally, they had persuaded the son to sign up for a treatment program, but the treatment program didn't have the funding it needed so there was a long waiting list, and the son died of an overdose while waiting on that list. We can't have that anymore.

What about veterans' healthcare? These are people who risked their lives for us. We need to do it.

What about millions of hard-working Americans who need pensions? One of the issues Americans are most worried about is pensions and retirement. For years, they paid into these plans. They were told: You know, when you retire,

you are not going to be rich, you are not going to be able to buy luxuries, but at least you will have a life of dignity. Now those pensions have been robbed from so many people throughout the country. Are we going to shrug our shoulders?

I hear the majority leader say he is not for parity. "Parity" is not just a word, it is veterans, people who need opioid relief, and middle-class folks and working people who need pensions. Are our Republican colleagues going to do what they just did in the tax bill and abandon the middle class? Are our Republican colleagues going to do what they tried to do in the healthcare bill and take away healthcare from millions of working people, people in the middle class? "Parity" is the term we use around here. I would rather call it defending middle-class America. Just as it is important to defend America from foreign enemies, which our military does so bravely and proudly, we have to defend America here.

I plead with Leader MCCONNELL not to abandon the middle class in this bill. Funding the military is a worthy goal and so is helping the middle class. For the past year, unfortunately, our Republican colleagues have been doing what the very wealthy people want and ignoring the middle class and working people. That is one of the reasons right now so many Americans say they would rather have a Democratic Senate than a Republican Senate. I would rather have a Senate that helps the middle class, whatever the political outcome, but our colleagues don't seem to be going for that.

I say to Leader MCCONNELL, my friend, you cannot let the hard right dictate what you want because the hard right and their wealthy benefactors are not where America is. It is not even where the Republican Party has always been.

Now, in addition to parity helping the middle class, we need to do other things. We should pass a disaster package that treats all States and territories fairly given the necessity of relief in Texas, California, Louisiana, Florida, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. By the way, we need to make sure we straighten out things in the West so the Forest Service isn't robbed of the funding they need to prevent future forest fires as they take the money out to handle present forest fires. We need to do that.

I know a lot of Congressmen from the House want aid. Even though many of them opposed aid when New York and New Jersey had a crisis, we are not going to play tit for tat, but we want a fair bill, and we want our priorities recognized as well.

Finally, there are the Dreamers. This must be done now. Leader MCCONNELL seems to think there is no urgency. We disagree strongly—respectfully but strongly. There is an urgent need. We have hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, of Americans who want America to be their country—who were