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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 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 God of light, in whom there is no darkness, thank You for Your love. You are a guide who gently leads us. You are a mystery but not a puzzle, profound but not incomprehensible. You are loving but not sentimental, patient and long-suffering but not weak and indecisive. O God, You are all things that we are not but need to be.

You, O God, with steadiness and perseverance, move in the lives of humanity and in the life of the whole world and its events. Awaken our lawmakers to Your inescapable presence. Enable them to feel You in their midst as they grapple with the problems of our time.

And, Lord, we thank You for the many years of faithful service by Kathie Alvarez.

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.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HELLER). The majority leader is recognized.

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2015—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to H.R. 240.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the motion.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 5, H.R. 240, a bill making appropriations for the Department of Homeland Security for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2015, and for other purposes.

CARTER NOMINATION

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, later today the Senate will consider the nomination of Ash Carter to be the next Secretary of Defense.

If I could place one demand on him, it would be to leave our Armed Forces in a better position to deal with global threats than they are today. As I have noted in the past, the overall consequence of many of the President's policies have been to weaken our ability to confront Al Qaeda and its affiliates, the Taliban, and associated groups.

The President's inflexible commitment to campaign promises made in 2008 has led to artificial deadlines for withdrawal from Afghanistan, a rushed withdrawal from Iraq, and Executive orders to close Guantanamo and send detainees back home to places such as Yemen and Afghanistan. It has also led essentially to end America's ability to capture, detain, and interrogate terrorists—whether or not we are still at war with Al Qaeda.

The truth is Al Qaeda was at war with us before we went to war with them, and today we face a diffuse and versatile threat from terrorists, with ISIL intent on striking America and its allies.

The next Secretary of Defense needs to explain to the President that drawing down in Afghanistan—based on an artificial deadline—risks the gains we have made there. He needs to explain that the Haqqani network and the Taliban continue to threaten our allies.

The next Secretary of Defense must do all he can to make a declaratory

policy of pivoting to Asia a real one. Past drawdowns of conventional power and failure to modernize the American force have encouraged foes and unsettled friends. So it is time to invest in the platforms and the capabilities needed to address effectively China's military buildup, and the next Secretary must also support the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff when he provides his best military advice to the President, especially when that advice is ignored in the White House.

In the Senate I will do all I can to support the next Secretary. That starts today. I intend to support Ash Carter's nomination, but my support is conditioned on this request: The incoming Secretary needs to have the courage to speak truth to power—to Congress, yes, but also to his Commander in Chief.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE ACTING MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The assistant Democratic leader is recognized.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I have been trying to understand what has been holding up the funding for the Department of Homeland Security.

The Department of Homeland Security is the agency we created after 9/11 that merged 22 different agencies of our government to make sure that 9/11 never happened again. We created this new Department, and we said to them: Keep America safe. Use our tax resources and your best efforts to keep America safe. Thank goodness that we have not had a repeat of that terrible tragedy of 9/11 since—under either Republican or Democratic Presidents.

When we started debating about funding the agencies of government in December with an omnibus budget bill, the House Republicans said: We will fund the entire Government of the United States, but we will not give regular budget appropriations to the Department of Homeland Security. They singled out the one department responsible for our safety and security and

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



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