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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.

Eternal God, our Strength, thank You for Your providential love. Today give our Senators the wisdom to do what is right. Enlighten their minds with Your truth as You warm their hearts with Your love. Lord, fill their lives with Your power that they may accomplish Your purposes. Make them so aware of Your presence that they will remember that wherever they are and whatever they do, You see them. May they feel nothing but to grieve You and seek nothing except to please You.

We pray in Your Holy 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. PAUL). The majority leader is recognized.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 2146

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

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

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2146) to hold sanctuary jurisdictions accountable for defying Federal law, to increase penalties for individuals who illegally reenter the United States after being removed, and to provide liability protection for State and local law enforcement who cooperate with Federal law enforcement and for other purposes.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection having been heard, the bill will be placed on the calendar.

ADOPTIVE FAMILY RELIEF ACT

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, before I speak on the legislation the Senate will consider this afternoon, I want to say a few words about S. 1300, the Adoptive Family Relief Act. I spoke on this bill in July after it passed the Senate with unanimous consent. Now I would like to praise the House of Representatives for passing this important piece of legislation just yesterday.

The issue this bill addresses is of particular importance to me, and I am proud to be an original cosponsor of the legislation. More than 400 American families, approximately 20 of them from Kentucky, have successfully adopted children from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, or the DRC. However, due to the DRC Government's years-long suspension of exit permits, many of these families have been unable to bring their adoptive children home to the United States.

To make matters worse, families have been financially burdened by the cost of continually renewing their children's visas while they wait for the day the DRC decides to lift its suspension. In an attempt to help these families, the Adoptive Family Relief Act would provide meaningful financial relief by granting the State Department authority to waive the fees for multiple visa renewals in these and other extraordinary adoption circumstances.

This bill builds on Congress' bipartisan efforts on the adoption issue, including my amendment to this year's budget resolution to encourage a solution to the situation as well as numerous bipartisan congressional letters sent to Congolese officials.

Later today I will have the opportunity to meet with the Brock family from Owensboro. I was grateful to assist in the return of their medically fragile child from the DRC last Christmas. However, their other adopted son still remains in the country.

For this Kentucky family, and for many others still waiting, I again strongly urge the Government of the DRC to resolve the matter expeditiously and in a way that provides for the swift unification of families. Until then, I want to praise the bipartisan action that led to the passage of the Adoptive Family Relief Act. I hope families see this as a message that Congress is supporting them.

This bill will now go to the President for his signature. It is my hope it will bring needed assistance to so many loving families, like the Brocks, who want nothing more than to open their homes to a child in need.

Allow me to also thank the sponsors of this bill, Senators FEINSTEIN and JOHNSON and Representative TRENT FRANKS, for all their hard work. That thanks extends as well to the 78 other cosponsors in both Chambers and both parties, along with the Senate and House judiciary committees for their hard work and truly bipartisan commitment to solving this heartbreaking issue.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION BILL

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, on another matter before the Senate this afternoon, I was glad to see the Senate come together yesterday to advance the bipartisan National Defense Authorization Act. This bipartisan Defense bill will support our men 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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