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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Tuesday, June 28, 2016, at 5 p.m.

Senate

MONDAY, JUNE 27, 2016

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.

Almighty God, the way, the truth, and the life, shine Your light upon our lawmakers as they begin a new week. Illuminate their minds with Your wisdom, that they may know what to think and do, refusing to become weary in well-doing. Lord, keep them from straying from Your precepts as they remember that those who walk with integrity walk securely. Teach them the lessons they need to learn so that they will not repeat the mistakes of the past. May they serve this land with competence and faithfulness, never forgetting their accountability to You. Cause them to hear Your words and to follow where You lead.

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 (Mrs. ERNST). The majority leader is recognized.

ZIKA VIRUS AND VA-MILCON FUNDING BILL

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, combatting the spread of the Zika virus should be a priority for both parties. We worked hard to forge a compromise solution that made \$1.1 billion available to fight this virus. That compromise plan already passed the Senate with unanimous support of Democrats.

We now have a bicameral agreement that provides the exact same compromise level of funding. The House did its job and approved the legislation. The Senate can now do its job to send that legislation down to the President.

Democrats joined Republicans in sounding the alarm about Zika, but now we are at the finish line, and suddenly our friends across the aisle are changing their tune. Here is what the fourth-ranking Senate Democrat recently said:

Families are looking to Congress for action on Zika. It is well past time that we delivered.

So will she help the Senate deliver tomorrow or play partisan politics?

Here is what the third-ranking Senate Democrat recently said: "Every day we wait, every day is increasing the risk that we will have problems with Zika." So will he help the Senate to take action tomorrow or play partisan politics?

The second-ranking Democrat recently said that "the mosquitoes carrying this deadly virus are on the march." So will he help the Senate arrest that march before the Fourth of July or play partisan politics?

Here is what the Democratic leader recently said: "Every day we wait is a

bad day . . . for America and the world." So will he help the Senate pass this \$1.1 billion Zika control funding compromise or play partisan politics and delay action for weeks?

The White House, which recently called for congressional action on Zika by July 4, said:

[T]he time to prepare before Zika begins to spread in the continental United States is rapidly closing. . . . [W]e need some congressional action. We need a sense of urgency and we need it now.

Democrats have tried to claim they weren't involved in negotiations over this legislation, but they were from beginning to end, and the House agreed to the funding level that Democrats supported unanimously.

Democrats have tried to trot out the "war on women" playbook, but this legislation actually provides more resources for women's health services—through hospitals, health departments, community health centers, and other public programs.

Democrats have even tried to claim that this Zika legislation would endanger clean water protections, but it won't. It contains a temporary, targeted compromise that will allow experts to actually get at mosquito control, the root cause of Zika, in an effective way while we wait for a vaccine. The agreement before us is a compromise with input from both parties, and it represents the last chance we will have to address Zika for weeks.

The CDC Director testified that the \$1.1 billion funding level will allow him "to do the things we need to do in the immediate term." He said: "The sooner we get a bill, the better."

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



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Senate Democrats have already unanimously supported the \$1.1 billion in funding to combat the virus. Voting to block this bill now will delay Zika control funding well beyond the White House's deadlines.

So look, there is no reason Democrats should reverse course now and block funding for Zika control in the midst of mosquito season. There is no reason they should put partisan politics above the health of pregnant women and babies, and there is no reason they should block support for our veterans, either.

The legislation before us will honor commitments to the men and women who have served to protect us. It includes a significant increase for the VA to help improve the quality of health care services and benefits that our veterans have earned, it will enhance oversight and accountability at the VA, and it will help improve quality of life on military bases for soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, and their families.

Our men and women in uniform make sacrifices daily on our behalf—sacrifices such as missing special moments with their families, being stationed in distant places far from home, suffering physical wounds they will carry with them long after their service is over.

Sadly, too many of our servicemembers are also burdened by wounds that cannot be seen, such as traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder. We are reminded of their daily sacrifices on this National PTSD Awareness Day.

We know that too many of our veterans and their families are unfortunately all too familiar with the challenges and sorrows this condition can bring. We know too that while our warriors may return home from the battlefield due to effective medevac and trauma care, there is a generation of warriors who will need treatment and support literally for decades to come.

We owe this support to the servicemembers who drove Al Qaeda from Afghanistan and offered the Iraqis an opportunity for a better future. We owe it to each and every veteran who has sacrificed to help keep us safe.

We have an all-volunteer force in this country. The young men and women who sign up to defend our Nation don't ask for very much, but our Nation certainly asks a lot of them. They deserve the benefits, care, and treatment they have earned.

We need to pass the Veterans Affairs and Military Construction funding bill before us as soon as possible.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

ZIKA VIRUS AND VA-MILCON FUNDING BILL

Mr. REID. Madam President, here are just a few brief words on the Zika fund-

ing matter. This conference report is full of poison pills. I will give you just a few of them.

Again, the House Republicans can't help themselves and, of course, the Senate Republicans joined with them. They have to do everything they can to whack Planned Parenthood, and that is what they do in this conference report. They restrict funding for birth control provided by Planned Parenthood. Can you believe that? And with this Zika problem, who does it affect? Women, and especially pregnant women. It exempts pesticide spraying from Clean Water Act prohibitions and protections, cuts veterans funding by \$500 million, cuts Ebola funding by \$107 million, and cuts ObamaCare by \$543 million.

Listen to this one. Why would they do this? They stick a provision in this that strikes a prohibition that we had placed in the legislation on displaying a Confederate flag. What they have done is just great. Any veterans facility can fly that Confederate flag. Why would they put that in this bill? Of course, it sets a terrible precedent for offsetting emergency spending, and it is missing \$800 million—what a shame.

It is like we are being dared to oppose this legislation. We have no choice.

UNITED KINGDOM EXIT FROM EUROPEAN UNION

Mr. REID. Madam President, last week the voters of the United Kingdom stunned the world by voting to exit the European Union. The vote was close, but ultimately the electorate decided to sever the United Kingdom from the European Union, an organization they had been a part of for 40 years. I was disappointed by that decision, but it was their decision.

In the aftermath of last week's referendum, I was pleased that President Obama reaffirmed our special relationship with the United Kingdom and our strong ties to the European Union. Regardless of what happens with the so-called Brexit, the United States will continue to maintain strong alliances with Britain and Europe.

SUPREME COURT DECISIONS AND FILLING THE SUPREME COURT VACANCY

Mr. REID. Madam President, this morning the Supreme Court issued its final set of rulings for the year for the Court's term.

I was pleased with two of the Court's decisions especially. One pertains to women's health and one with keeping guns away from dangerous individuals. In the Court's 5-to-3 decision in *Whole Woman's Health*, the Court affirmed the constitutionally protected rights of American women. The Justices struck down a Texas law that limited women's rights and restricted access to health care.

Infringing upon the rights of Texans has become all too familiar for the gov-

ernment of Texas. It is a theme they have, and they play that theme all the time and they march to it. The State has pushed laws to restrict people's right to vote. In the last general election, 600,000 Texans couldn't vote because they didn't have the right ID. The State has pushed laws to restrict people's right to vote and limit victims' ability to recover deserved damages after accidents and medical malpractice. The law restricting women's care was just the most recent example of Texas trampling on the rights of its people. So I am pleased that the Supreme Court struck down Texas' unconstitutional attempt to deprive women of health care.

In another ruling today, the Supreme Court also whacked the National Rifle Association. By a 6-to-2 decision, the Justices upheld a Federal law that bans people convicted of domestic violence from buying guns.

While the Supreme Court did its job today, I must note the many other missed opportunities in the Court over the last 4 months. Due to the Republicans historic obstruction of Judge Merrick Garland's nomination, the United States' highest Court is often deadlocked. The Court has been unable to provide definitive rulings on some of the most important issues of our time because there are not nine Justices, but only eight, due to the Republicans' obstruction. For the first time in the history of the country in a year right before an election, the Republicans have decided they are not going to allow a vote on a Supreme Court nomination. It has never happened before. By denying President Obama the chance to fill this vacancy, the Republicans have infected the Supreme Court with the same gridlock they have perfected with the Congress for the last 7 years. Eight Supreme Court Justices are simply not enough to serve the American people and the rule of law.

One Drake University constitutional law professor wrote recently:

With just eight members, the Court cannot resolve certain controversial cases. It can split 4-4, which means there is no uniform rule of law.

All told, the Supreme Court has deadlocked on seven important cases and issues.

Because of Senate Republicans, employers can deny women who are working access to contraception coverage; because of Senate Republicans, companies can misuse the private information of consumers; and because of Senate Republicans, lenders can discriminate against married women.

There are others. The most glaring example, though, was from last Thursday when the Court was unable to reach a majority decision on an important immigration case. It issued a one-sentence ruling: "The judgment is affirmed by an equally divided Court."

As former Solicitor General Walter Dellinger wrote, "Seldom have so many hopes been crushed by so few words."