United States of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 116th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 166 WASHINGTON, TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2020 No. 154

Senate

The Senate met at 3 p.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. GRASSLEY).

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal God, our hope for years to come, empower our lawmakers to live with integrity. Lord, inspire them to permit their words to be matched by their deeds. As they strive for this ethical congruence, strengthen them to examine their hearts with the goal of seeking to glorify You. Living by Your precepts, may they aspire to be faithful to the noble calling of serving You and country.

We pray in Your majestic 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.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. BLACKBURN).

The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for 1 minute in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

IOWA 99 COUNTY MEETINGS

Mr. GRASSLEY. In August, I held 49 county meetings as part of my annual 99-county set of meetings in Iowa. At every meeting, the format is the same: Iowans set the agenda.

Challenges from the pandemic and storm recovery were among their top concerns. To explain the storm recovery—about once every 10 years there is a big wind storm called a derecho going across someplace in the country. That path was about 150 miles long in Iowa and 34 miles wide, and it destroyed the crops for this year in that area. Other issues came up as well. Biofuels, unemployment insurance, the farm economy, access to childcare and school reopenings were frequent points of discussion. I had the chance of visiting in 15 different locations with about that many school superintendents, and they were very optimistic about the coming school year.

This is my 40th year holding my 99 county meetings. I started this tradition when I first was elected to the Senate, so Iowans in every corner of the State would know I care about their opinions.

It is an honor to serve Iowans in the U.S. Senate and uphold my end of representative government. I look forward to more Q&As across the State this year and starting my 41st year of 99 county meetings in 2021.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Our Nation has spent the last 6 months fighting the medical, economic, and social effects of this pandemic. The Senate's historic rescue package from back in March, the CARES Act, has gone a long way to help American workers and families endure these incredible challenges.

It delivered the extra Federal unemployment benefits that helped laid-off workers make ends meet. It created the Paycheck Protection Program, which has helped millions of small businesses keep their lights on and keep employees on the payroll; it sent resources to the frontlines of the healthcare fight; and it invested billions in the race for treatments and for vaccines.

But this relief was never going to last forever. Today, enhanced Federal unemployment benefits are only still available because of action by President Trump. The Paycheck Protection Program has closed to new applications, and the funds it has delivered are being exhausted. This last month has brought a whole new challenge: how to get teachers and students safely into a new school year. These are the challenges that people I represent are facing every single day. Kentuckians and all Americans know this unprecedented crisis is not through with us yet, and so they expect that Congress isn't through helping yet either.

Senate Republicans have been fighting for months to deliver another round of COVID–19 relief. In July, we proposed the HEALS Act, a sweeping package totaling more than $1 trillion that would have led right to bipartisan talks, but Speaker PELOSI and the Democratic leader said no.

They said they would block our trillion dollars for kids, jobs, and healthcare unless we doubled the cost to accommodate an endless wish list of non-COVID-related liberal priorities such as tax cuts for blue-State millionaires.

So Republicans tried another way to break the logjam. In August, we proposed narrowing discussions to some of the most urgent, most bipartisan subjects that seemed especially ripe for agreement, but Speaker PELOSI and the Democratic leader blocked that as well. Now they claimed it was too ''piecemeal''—too piecemeal, they said—to get any help out the door until Democrats and Republicans had settled every disagreement on every front.

The Democratic leaders have spent months playing these ''Goldilocks'' games. They have complained about every single thing we put forward but produced nothing of their own with any chance whatsoever of becoming law.

Printed on recycled paper.