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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

PRAYER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Today's opening prayer will be offered by Pastor Jeff Wheeler, pastor of the Central Baptist Church in Sioux Falls, SD.

The guest Chaplain offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

God, with the uncertainty in our world today, we pause to declare Your matchless power and moral perfection. We are reminded that You are in control. You govern Your creation with righteousness and truth. You extend mercy to the downcast and hope to the broken. May these men and women govern with the same spirit.

You tell us righteousness elevates a nation to greatness. O God, forgive our sin and grant righteous judgment to these leaders as they make moral and ethical decisions. Please grant discernment.

Fill our hearts with compassion for the weak, courage in adversity, wisdom through debate, and vision in the storm. May every decision be tethered to the anchor of Your unending truth.

O Lord, be pleased to dwell among us today. Let Your presence dispel the darkness of self-centeredness. Let humility give birth to the servant-hearted spirit. May Your Name once again be great in our Nation, for Yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever.

In Jesus's 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 (Mr. ROUNDS). The senior Senator from South Dakota.

WELCOMING THE GUEST CHAPLAIN

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, it is a great honor for me to be able to welcome to the Senate today our pastor from Sioux Falls, SD, Jeff Wheeler, who just offered our invocation this morning, and to express how much Kimberley and I have appreciated the opportunity to worship and to benefit from his ministry. We enjoy and are blessed by his teaching each and every single week when we are back home in South Dakota. His ministry has and continues to impact people all across our community, across our State, and across our region.

He and his wife Shirlene are with us today in the Senate, and on behalf of myself and my colleagues, we extend the warmest welcome and appreciate the great work he does in serving the Lord in South Dakota and across our country.

Thank you, Mr. President.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

SYRIAN REFUGEES

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, it is clear that the American people are concerned about the administration's ability to properly vet thousands of individuals from Syria. More than half of our Nation's Governors, Governors of both parties, have demonstrated their concern. Many Members in Congress, Members of both parties, have raised concerns as well.

Given all this and given all that has happened in Paris, it simply makes sense to take a step back for now, to

press the pause button so we can determine the facts and ensure we have the correct policies and security screenings in place. That is the most responsible thing for the administration to do right now. That is the most reasonable and balanced thing for the administration to do right now.

We should also not lose sight of why we are in this position to begin with. The Syrian people are fleeing Syria because of a brutal civil war. The ultimate solution to this problem is to make Syria a place the Syrian people can continue to return to, but the administration has never had a coherent strategy to settle this conflict. Every single one of us knows that ISIL presents a threat to our homeland, and it is not contained. So if the administration is serious about starting to turn this situation around, then it is going to have to develop a serious and workable strategy that can swing and win strong bipartisan support.

GUANTANAMO BAY DETENTION FACILITY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, years ago, then-candidate Obama made a campaign promise that has not withstood the measure of time or the realities brought by terrorism. He said he wanted to close the secure detention facility at Guantanamo Bay. Ever since, he has pursued policies that willfully avoided the targeting chain of capture, interrogate, build intelligence, and target. It turns out that the reality of closing the secure detention facility is a lot harder than making promises on the campaign trail. It is an incredibly complex issue with grave national security concerns for the citizens of our country and for our allies.

The fact that the President has never been able to present any kind of serious plan to Congress seems to say quite a lot. We hear he is working on one now. We will, of course, give consideration to what the President says. We

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



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