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Senate

(Legislative day of Tuesday, March 16, 2021)

The Senate met at 10:30 a.m., on the expiration of the recess, and was called to order by the Honorable MARTIN HEINRICH, a Senator from the State of New Mexico.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Father in Heaven, bless our Senators. May they strive to act with integrity. Guide them to listen to the voice of conscience, seeking to please You with their motives as well as their actions. Lord, give them such ethical congruence that their words will be validated by laudable actions. Test their hearts with Your unfailing love, empowering them to become instruments of Your peace. Mighty God, keep their feet on solid ground.

We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer 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.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U. S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, March 17, 2021.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable MARTIN HEINRICH, a

Senator from the State of New Mexico, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATRICK J. LEAHY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. HEINRICH thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

PPP EXTENSION ACT OF 2021

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, in a second, I will move the PPP bill to the floor. I hope—and I ask our Republican colleagues to cooperate—that we can move this bipartisan PPP proposal without delay. It passed the House overwhelmingly. A vast majority of Democrats and Republicans voted for it. I hope we can move it quickly here in the Senate as it expires on March 31, and there are some changes that were made in the ARP that people need time to adapt to and implement. To allow a lapse would not be the right thing to do for so many of our small business people across the country. So I am hoping that our Republican colleagues will move the bill with the same alacrity with which it passed in the House with an overwhelmingly bipartisan majority. I think there were fewer than 10 votes against it.

MEASURE READ THE FIRST TIME—H.R. 1799

Mr. SCHUMER. With that, Mr. President, I understand that there is a bill

at the desk, and I ask for its first reading.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will read the bill by title for the first time.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 1799) to amend the Small Business Act and the CARES Act to extend the covered period for the paycheck protection program, and for other purposes.

Mr. SCHUMER. I now ask for a second reading, and in order to place the bill on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I object to my own request.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection having been heard, the bill will receive its second reading on the next legislative day.

GEORGIA SHOOTINGS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, now let me proceed to my remarks.

First, on the terrible tragedy in Georgia, the people of Atlanta, GA, and the surrounding communities were just shocked last night by a series of shootings that left eight people dead, six of whom were of Asian descent.

The motivations behind this devastating tragedy are still unknown, but there is a legitimate concern that these killings may have been racially motivated. Over the past year, the Asian-American community has faced a rising tide of abuse and violence in the wake of COVID-19, driven by ignorance, by misinformation, and by age-old prejudices against the Asian-American community. Tragically, hate crimes against Asian Americans have skyrocketed.

There is bigotry in the land and far too much of it. These dark forces have always existed in America, but, recently, they seem to have been unleashed. The sort of superego that puts

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



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these things down seems to have weakened, and the id seems to have strengthened.

We cannot lose for a moment our vigilance against these forces of hate, intolerance, bigotry, and discrimination.

I love the Asian American community. They have done so much for America. I see it in my borough of Brooklyn, in my city and State of New York, and throughout the country—hard-working people, people who do so much for our country at every level. They are welcome here. That is America. Yet, bigots have increased hate crimes and maybe even possibly led to the deaths of these people.

So I hope that all Americans first will realize that there is too much hate in the land, that hate against one group is hate against any group, and we should all, Americans of every background and race and creed, color, and religion, gender, and sexual orientation, band together against the haters. It is so un-American.

E pluribus unum—out of many, one. That is what America has always been. That is what America must continue to be, and our voices must speak out.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. SCHUMER. Second, on nominations, the Senate is once again making excellent progress this week confirming President Biden's nominees. We began the week by confirming a history-making Cabinet member, Interior Secretary Haaland. Yesterday, we confirmed Isabel Guzman as the SBA Administrator. Today, we will confirm another consequential administrative appointment, the U.S. Trade Representative.

President Biden has named Katherine Tai, the daughter of proud immigrants from Taiwan, a veteran of the Office of the Trade Representative under President Obama, and one of our country's most seasoned experts in international trade. That—Ms. Tai—is what America is all about.

We welcome her. We give her a great position of authority because of her expertise. And maybe—you know, I will leave it at that. It is a great contrast to the tragedy I was talking about a few minutes ago and the ascension of another proud American of Asian ancestry here.

As U.S. Trade Representative, Ms. Tai will play a crucial role in enforcing existing trade deals and making sure that American workers, businesses, and researchers can compete on a level playing field. She will be an essential player in restoring America's credibility with our trading partners and promoting international cooperation to tackle some of the world's biggest problems, from the global pandemic to climate change.

I have not a single doubt that Ms. Tai is the right person for the job, and I look forward to the Senate giving her a well-deserved promotion later today.

FOR THE PEOPLE ACT OF 2021

Mr. SCHUMER. Now on S. 1, democracy reform, today Senate Democrats are introducing the No. 1 bill of the 117th Congress, S. 1, to stand up to voter suppression, end dark money in politics, and reinvigorate American democracy in the 21st century.

Make no mistake, democracy reform must be a top priority of this Congress, and I will put S. 1, the For the People Act, on the floor of the Senate.

For too long, we have let really important parts of our democracy wither. Unlimited dark money flows into campaigns. Special interests have way too much influence in Washington. And worst of all, there is a concerted, nationwide effort to limit the right of American citizens, particularly people of color, to vote.

Throughout America's history, we have seen a continuous cycle of expansions in our democracy being met all too often by vehement backlash from those who wish to maintain an exclusionary status quo.

Earlier this year, we witnessed only the latest example in the form of a violent insurrection right here in this Chamber, right here in this Capitol, an attack fueled by the insidious lies of the former President aimed at overturning the results of a free and fair election.

In the wake of the November election, one of the safest and most secure in American history, dozens of Republican-led State legislatures have seized on the former President's big lie and introduced hundreds of bills aimed at tightening voting rules under the nasty guise—the nasty, malicious, and false guise—of election integrity. These bills, sadly, are aimed at Americans of color—Black Americans, Latinos, Native Americans.

Despicable efforts to target these historically disenfranchised communities have become a central component of the electoral strategy of one of America's major political parties. Shame on them. Shame. It is infuriating. Infuriating. When you lose an election, you are supposed to win over the people you lost, not stop them from voting. That is un-American, autocratic, and against the fundamentals of our democracy, but this is happening in States all across the country—all across the country.

Maybe the most reprehensible effort is underway in Georgia, where State Republicans are trying to limit absentee and mail-in voting, make it harder to post a ballot by drop box, and disallowing early voting on Sunday, a day when many churchgoing African Americans participate in voter drives. Does anyone on the other side of the aisle think taking away Sunday voting in Georgia is not bigoted? What is the rationale? Stop it, if you want to stand for equality and justice.

Our country has supposedly come a long way since African Americans in the South were forced to guess the number of jellybeans in a jar in order

to vote. But some of these voter suppression laws in Georgia and other Republican States smack of Jim Crow in the 21st century rearing its ugly head once again.

These laws and their various cousins in Republican State legislatures across the country are collectively one of the greatest threats to modern American democracy. According to a recent report in the Washington Post, these laws could strain every available method of voting for tens of millions of Americans, potentially amounting to the most sweeping contraction of ballot access in the United States since the end of Reconstruction, when Southern States curtailed the voting rights of formerly enslaved Black men.

If one party believes "heads we win; tails you cheated"; if one political party believes that when you lose an election, the answer isn't to win more votes but, rather, to prevent the other side from voting, then we have serious and existential threats to our democracy on our hands.

This is no political dispute. It goes way beyond that to the core—the core—of what America is all about. That is why we need S. 1 so badly, a bill that would combat all of these voter suppression efforts by restoring critical parts of the Voting Rights Act; a bill that would make it easier, not harder, to vote by automatically registering American voters when they get a driver's license; a bill that would limit dark money and corruption in our politics and much more.

There are a lot of problems in our country—healthcare and climate change and income inequality—but we designed a democracy that would allow competing interests in our country to come together and agree on solutions. If our democracy doesn't work, we have no hope of solving any of our other problems.

S. 1 is going to be a top priority this Congress. We will fight and fight and fight to get this done legislatively. Failure is not an option. Too darn much is at stake.

AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT OF 2021

Mr. SCHUMER. Now on the American Rescue Plan, I would like to continue shining a spotlight on different aspects of ARP. The legislation helped so many people and so much of the country, it is easy to forget many crucial parts of the bill. So later today, I will be joining my dear friend Representative VELÁZQUEZ from New York to talk about how the American Rescue Plan helps Puerto Rico, which is too often an afterthought in Federal legislation.

The American Rescue Plan will do three historic things for the people of Puerto Rico, American citizens all.

First, it will deliver Federal dollars to the island's earned income tax credit for low-wage workers for the first time ever.