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Senate

The Senate met at 12 noon and was called to order by the Honorable BEN RAY LUJÁN, a Senator from the State of New Mexico.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal God, during this sometimes chaotic season, remind our lawmakers anew that You will never leave or forsake us. Give them the wisdom to pray as if work had nothing to do with results and then to work as if prayer did not matter. As our Senators surrender life's crushing blows to Your mercy, transform their setbacks into stepping stones to abundant faith, hope, and joy. Use our lawmakers this day for Your glory.

We pray in Your sovereign 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 bill clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, April 13, 2021.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable BEN RAY LUJÁN, a Senator from the State of New Mexico, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATRICK J. LEAHY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. LUJÁN 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.

VIOLENCE AGAINST ASIAN AMERICANS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, over the past year, there has been a rising tide of violence and discrimination against Asian Americans, from shouted insults and racial slurs to outright physical assaults.

I have attended a whole bunch of rallies against Asian-American violence over the past few weeks. You would be heartsick—heartsick—to hear the stories shared, the fear in the voices of Asian-American citizens, and to listen to the way they change their daily lives to avoid the subway or stay indoors most of the day.

The surge in anti-Asian violence is revolting and, sadly, contains the echoes of dark chapters in our history when Asian Americans were subject to widespread bigotry and discrimination.

The poison of racism has always existed in America, but unfortunately, over the past 4 years, it seems to have found new life. There is no question that the former President fanned the flames of racial bias in our country and too often encouraged—let alone discouraged—the vicious slander that connected COVID-19 to the people of Asian descent.

Every day in America, in this 21st-century America, Asian Americans fear they might be insulted, assaulted, spat

upon, or even worse. As Americans, we must stand up and do something about it. The foundation of our pluralistic society is that an attack on one group is an attack on all of us. So tomorrow the Senate will vote on whether to take up and debate Senator HIRONO's anti-Asian hate crimes bill, sponsored by Representative MENG in the House. This bill is as unobjectionable as it could be. It would designate a point person at the Justice Department to identify hate crimes towards Asian Americans related to COVID-19, telling Federal law enforcement to make these hate crimes a top priority during the pandemic.

This isn't some kind of "gotcha" legislation. It is not some complex new program or appropriation. This is as straightforward as it gets. This is legislation our times demand.

Of course, we are open to strengthening the bill. I understand that there is an effort underway to add bipartisan legislation called the No Hate Act—sponsored by Senators BLUMENTHAL and MORAN, one Democrat and one Republican—as an amendment, and I fully support that effort.

The Blumenthal-Moran bill would provide resources to State and local law enforcement to improve hate crimes reporting, increase training, while also improving education to root out the bias that fuels these despicable, despicable acts. That makes perfect sense as a bipartisan amendment to Senator HIRONO's legislation, and I believe that combating hate against the Asian-American community should be thoroughly, if not unanimously, bipartisan.

Congress can send a strong signal in one loud, clear voice that these kinds of hate crimes will not be tolerated. The way to do it is for 60 Senators to vote to proceed to the bill tomorrow. I sure hope it will be more than 60. Then it is my intention to make the first amendment to the bill the bipartisan No Hate Act, but in order to offer the

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



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amendment, the Senate must vote to proceed with debate on the bill.

President Biden has called on Congress to swiftly pass Senator HIRONO's legislation and get it to his desk for signature as soon as possible. There is no good reason the Senate can't complete the task this week.

NOMINATION OF POLLY ELLEN TROTTEMBERG

Mr. SCHUMER. Now on another matter, beyond Senator HIRONO's legislation, the Senate is also focused this week on confirming an impressive slate of nominees to the Biden administration.

I am especially pleased that in a few hours, the Senate will vote to confirm Polly Trottenberg to serve as Deputy Secretary of Transportation. This is great news for New York and great news for the country.

Her credentials are beyond doubt. For the last 7 years, she has served as New York City's commissioner of transportation, managing a transportation system that helps tens of millions of people get to and from work, connects businesses to customers, and brings life to one of America's largest and most visited cities every single day.

Before that, Polly served in the Department of Transportation under President Obama, advising policymakers and working with stakeholders across the country on everything from high-speed rail to roads, highways, and bridges.

Of course, her nomination is especially meaningful to me. Polly served for nearly a decade as my legislative director and transportation adviser. She knows the needs of the country, and she knows the needs of New York. And a pet project so important to the New York Gateway will be well served in her capable hands. We will get this done.

Take it from me: Polly has smarts, she has savvy, and she has moxie. She knows how to work with people of all backgrounds to get things done for the American people. And there isn't a moment to lose. As we work to defeat the COVID-19 pandemic and bring our economy fully back online, we must look ahead to tackle the challenges of our time, and on top of the list is finally getting serious about addressing our Nation's crumbling infrastructure—a topic that Ms. Trottenberg is very familiar with.

For New York, as I mentioned, this means continuing to move the ball forward on projects like Gateway, rebuilding the two rail tunnels under the Hudson—perhaps the most important transportation infrastructure priority in the entire Nation and something I have spoken to Ms. Trottenberg and Secretary Buttigieg and President Biden about regularly.

But our infrastructure woes extend to every city and every State in the country. Our roads, bridges, highways,

airports, public transit, housing, and the electric grid are all in need of an overhaul. So, too, does our country need to invest in the infrastructure of the 21st century—broadband internet access, 5G, electric vehicles. America cannot compete in this century if our infrastructure is stuck in the last century.

That is why, in addition to confirming important nominees like Ms. Trottenberg, the Senate will continue to work with the Biden administration on a comprehensive infrastructure and jobs bill. If there is an issue that ought to unite Democrats and Republicans, it is putting people to work to update our Nation's infrastructure.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

HONORING OFFICER WILLIAM F. EVANS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, as we speak, for the second time this year, a fallen officer of the U.S. Capitol Police lies in honor under the Capitol dome.

This morning, Officer Billy Evans was welcomed here for a final time by grieving comrades and a Senate family that is immensely grateful for his life, his friendship, and his ultimate sacrifice.

Officer Evans died defending the Capitol, its institutions, and the thousands of people who come here to do the people's business. The circumstances of his killing remind us of the dangers that USCP officers swear, train, and prepare to meet whenever they might arise.

Yet, to that serious task, to his intense responsibilities, Officer Evans brought a spirit and strength of character that leaves us all at the Capitol with memories of kindness and friendship.

Today, I know our colleagues are holding Officer Evans and his family he leaves behind close in our thoughts and our prayers. His sacrifice will not be forgotten.

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, now on a completely different matter, just moments ago, new reporting suggests the Biden administration plans to turn

tail and abandon the fight in Afghanistan.

Precipitously withdrawing U.S. forces from Afghanistan is a grave mistake. It is a retreat in the face of an enemy that has not yet been vanquished and abdication of American leadership.

Leaders in both parties, including me, offered criticism when the prior administration floated the concept of a reckless withdrawal from Syria and Afghanistan. Those same voices in both parties should be equally concerned about the Biden administration's announcement today. A reckless pullback like this would abandon our Afghan, regional, and our NATO partners in a shared fight against terrorists that we have not yet won. It will also specifically abandon the women of Afghanistan, whose individual freedoms and human rights will be imperiled.

It did not have to unfold like this. Today in Afghanistan the fighting is borne almost exclusively by our local partners. We have successfully solicited more buy-in and more support from foreign partners as well. Our NATO allies have particularly been begging—begging—the United States to stay by their side. As a result, there was broad political support for a sustainable and residual presence to backstop the progress we have made.

In 2019, Republicans and Democrats joined hands to support an amendment I authored that cautioned against precipitous retreats from Afghanistan and Syria. A supermajority of Senators voted for it. A supermajority of Senators voted for it.

That amendment called upon the administration—the previous one—“to certify whether conditions have been met for the enduring defeat of al Qaeda and ISIS before initiating any further significant withdrawal of United States forces from [Syria or Afghanistan].”

Can President Biden certify that right now? We have seen this movie before, multiple times. Ten years ago, when President Obama let politics dictate the terms of our involvement in Iraq, those failed decisions invited the rise of ISIS.

It was our hasty abandonment of Afghanistan in the 1990s that allowed the Taliban to grab power in a bloody civil war and create the safe haven for terrorism that led to September the 11th, 2001.

Conflicts do not simply end. They are won or they are lost. America and American administrations must be in the business of winning. Al-Qaida and other radical Islamist terrorists have not yet been defeated.

There is no reason to believe the Taliban will abandon al-Qaida if we leave. We know we cannot conduct effective counterterrorism operations without presence and partners on the ground.

Foreign terrorists will not leave the United States alone simply because our politicians have grown tired of taking the fight to them. The President needs