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## Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable RAPHAEL G. WARNOCK, a Senator from the State of Georgia.

### PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

O God, who, by Your glorious power, brought hope into our lives, fill our lawmakers with Your peace. In the intricate challenges they face, provide them with the ability to persevere. Through life's storms, Lord, may they experience a peace because of their palpable connection with Your divine presence. In Your boundless compassion, be for them a shade by day and a defense by night. Give them the wisdom to please You by striving to live blameless lives.

We pray in Your merciful 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, September 14, 2021.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable RAPHAEL G. WARNOCK,

a Senator from the State of Georgia, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATRICK J. LEAHY,  
President pro tempore.

Mr. WARNOCK 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.

### BUSINESS BEFORE THE SENATE

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, we have a busy day in store for the Senate as we aim to hold a number of important votes before the start of Yom Kippur.

Today, we will vote to advance four Presidential nominations. First, we will confirm James Kvaal to be Under Secretary of Education, and we will also confirm both David Estudillo and Angel Kelley to serve as district judges in Washington and Massachusetts, respectively.

This afternoon, we will also advance the nomination of Ms. Veronica Rossman of Colorado, who has been nominated by President Biden to sit on the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals. Ms. Rossman has spent practically her entire legal career in public service as a Federal defender, giving a voice in the courtroom to those who often cannot afford legal representation.

She is also an immigrant, who fled Russia with her parents as a child after her family endured anti-Semitic persecution in their home country. She understands personally the damage faced by those who endure discrimination.

If confirmed, Ms. Rossman would be the only Federal defender to sit on the Tenth Circuit, and one of the few in the entire country. I am proud to have nominated Eunice Lee to the Second Circuit Court of New York. She, too, has been a Federal defender.

We also have plenty of prosecutors and corporate lawyers wearing black robes.

Like so many other of President Biden's judicial nominees, Ms. Rossman is going to bring a sorely needed perspective to our courts. The more we work to make our courts reflective of the diversity of this country, both demographic and professionally, the more we will strengthen the public's trust in our judicial system.

Now, secondly, today, the Senate Democrats will also continue work to turn President Biden's Build Back Better agenda into law. It bears repeating: This is a historic effort. This is not just another simple piece of legislation. We are laying a foundation for another century of American prosperity. Just like the Great Society and the New Deal before it, our legislation will bring transformational change to help build ladders so that those can climb up into the middle class, while making it easier for those already in the middle class to enjoy that middle class life and stay there. Too many in the middle class worry they are going to slip out with all the changes occurring in our society. We strengthen their ability to stay.

And too many who are trying to climb those ladders find the ladders steep and unavailable. We are providing those ladders so they can get there, too. It is strong, bold, important legislation, and it is really a privilege to be here in the Senate and consider something as strong and bold as this.

Later today, our caucus will discuss the latest elements of the reconciliation bill. Working with our colleagues in the House, we will have met the target date of September 15 set in 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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budget resolution for producing text to review.

I expect our committee chairs will provide an overview of all the work that each of their committees have done over the last 4 weeks in drafting legislative text, and the entire caucus will have the chance to offer feedback so we can continue to move this process forward.

This will continue to be a collaborative process. Everyone—everyone—is going to have input into this legislation. But, of course, our unity is our strength, and if we are not unified with 50 votes, we can't get anything done. So we all must come together.

Now, I am pleased to say, after working for weeks over the summer on our reconciliation bill, we are making great progress toward bringing the bill to the floor.

Now, while Democrats are fighting to strengthen the middle class, our Republican colleagues, unfortunately, are resorting to the same, tired, predictable objections they raise about practically any Democratic proposal. Rather than explain why they oppose supporting families or expanding healthcare or taking action on climate change, they spent the last several months recycling old accusations about “liberal wish lists.” And rather than engage our policies on the merits and have a real debate, too often they raised unwarranted and incorrect points about how these programs will impact inflation.

I remind my colleagues of a report released not long ago by the chief economist at Moody's Analytics, Mr. Mark Zandi. When Mr. Zandi examined the Democrats' two main legislative proposals, our infrastructure bill and our Build Back Better legislation, he concluded these packages would provide a massive boost to our economy. Specifically, he said our program would “lift the economy's longer-term growth potential” and would “lift productivity and labor force growth”; that is, our proposal will do exactly what we said it would do, according to this impartial arbiter, Mark Zandi.

And as for the Republicans' overheated rhetoric on inflation, Mr. Zandi dismisses such concerns as “overdone” and said our two infrastructure bills are designed to “ease”—his words—inflation pressures.

Let me repeat that. According to Moody's top economist—hardly a fervent liberal—the Democratic proposals would actually ease inflation pressures, not raise them.

When you strengthen worker productivity, when you increase supply chains, the push to inflation decreases—decreases. And he also said that, in the long term, it would help grow our economy so that more Americans can get to and stay in the middle class.

Compare that to the signature accomplishments that Senate Republicans forced when they were in charge: a massive tax break for corporations

and the wealthy that did little to help everyday Americans.

That is the difference between a Democratic majority and a Republican one. We are fighting to strengthen American workers and American families. Republicans seem only worried about protecting those at the very top.

And, in addition, to those with inflationary concerns, we are going to pay for our proposal. The Trump tax cuts, which every Republican voted for, created a \$2 trillion deficit.

So let's be realistic here. Let's be honest here. The charges of runaway inflation are just wrong, especially when you consider we are paying for it, when Republicans were so willing to give tax cuts to the rich without paying for them at all.

#### VOTING RIGHTS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, now, on another subject—one that the Presiding Officer cares about a great deal, among the many other things you care about a great deal—voting rights. All year long, Senate Democrats have committed to passing legislation to protect the most sacrosanct right in our democracy, the right to vote. On two occasions, Senate Democrats voted unanimously to begin debate in the Senate on this critical issue, and both times Republicans formed a wall of total opposition against any progress on voting rights in the U.S. Senate.

But Republicans' refusal to work with us is no excuse for not getting something done. So later today, my colleague, Senator KLOBUCHAR, along with Senators KAIN, KING, MANCHIN, MERKLEY, PADILLA, TESTER, and WARNOCK, will be introducing the Freedom to Vote Act, a compromise voting rights bill that I intend to schedule a vote on in the very near future.

To piece this bill together, I am proud to have convened and worked with eight Members of my caucus—four progressives and four moderates—in bringing this bill to fruition. The compromise proposal contains many of the important provisions of previous voting rights bills championed by Senate Democrats, particularly by my colleague Senator MERKLEY. It will protect the right to vote and put a stop to partisan gerrymandering and the scourge of dark money in our politics. Critically, the legislation also incorporates important feedback from election officials and includes new measures to promote greater voter confidence in our elections while stopping partisan election subversion. This is a good proposal, one that nobody in this Chamber should oppose.

My colleague Senator MANCHIN is working with Republicans to secure support for the bill, and we look forward to hearing what changes they might make on legislation. I applaud Senator MANCHIN for his work here. He has always said that he wants to try and bring Republicans on, and now with the support of Democrats and this

compromise bill that Senator MANCHIN had great input into, he can go forward in that regard.

The fact of the matter is that this legislation is critical for stopping some of the most egregious assaults against voting rights happening at the State level. A few weeks ago, the Governor of Texas signed one of the most sweeping voter suppression bills in the entire country. It comes on the heels of other restrictions sprouting across the country—from ending election day registration in Montana, limiting after-hour drop boxes in Florida, and even making it a crime to give food and water to voters at the polls in Georgia.

No one can look at these restrictions with a straight face and say they have a legitimate purpose. They have only one goal. It is a despicable goal. It is a nasty goal, making it harder for younger, poorer, non-White, and typically Democratic voters to access the ballot.

Republicans lost the election. Biden is President. I am majority leader. Instead of doing what you are supposed to do in a democracy—win over the people you didn't win before—they are trying to stop the people who didn't vote for them from voting. That is autocratic, anti-democratic—small “D”—and not what America is all about. It is a new phase of what used to be called “Jim Crow.”

The Freedom to Vote Act is a necessary step to put an end to these assaults on the franchise. As majority leader, it is my intention to hold a vote on this bill as soon as next week, as I mentioned.

#### DEBT CEILING

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, now, finally, on debt ceiling. In the long history of our country—the long, long history—the United States has never defaulted on its obligations to pay its debt. The full faith and credit of the United States has been the bedrock of our country's economic prosperity—a spotless record that both parties have, for years, worked together to preserve.

No matter who was President, Democrat or Republican, in the past, the other party always stepped up to the plate and said: We can't let the country default.

Until most recently, when President Trump was in office, Democrats stepped up on three separate occasions to work with Republicans to suspend the debt ceiling and continue to ensure that the U.S. was able to pay its bills, even when there was a Democratic majority in the House. We did not resort to hostage-taking or proclaim that it was the other side's responsibility. We simply knew that when it came to the debt ceiling, it was important to put aside political differences and act responsibly, no matter who sits in the Oval Office.

We know that failing to raise the debt ceiling would be—as the Republican leader has said in the past when