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Senate

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

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal God, who comes to us with light and life, turn the illumination of Your love upon our lawmakers, providing them with strength for today and bright hopes for tomorrow. May they feel Your presence moment by moment and comprehend that You can still make the crooked places straight.

Lord, remind them that they are stewards of Your blessings and accountable to You for their actions. Help them also to remember that You require faithfulness from all who serve Your Kingdom.

We pray in Your wonderful 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 PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Hawaii.

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HIRONO). Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

BUSINESS BEFORE THE SENATE

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, the Senate begins this week with a lot to accomplish in very little time. This week, and in weeks to come, Senate Democrats will continue our work to pass historic legislation to strengthen our economy and renew America's middle class for the 21st century.

Very soon, we will also take up a continuing resolution to avoid a need-less government shutdown and provide emergency funding necessary to settle Afghan refugees and those devastated by this summer's natural disasters.

We must also work on a bipartisan basis to extend the debt ceiling to preserve the very important and cherished full faith and credit of the United States.

The Senate will also consider recently introduced voting rights legislation and advancing President Biden's nominees to the judiciary and to his administration.

So the next few weeks will be critical weeks for the Senate. Members should be prepared for the possibility of working late nights and into the weekend.

On the nominations front, we will begin the week by confirming Ms. Veronica Rossman of Colorado to serve on the Tenth Circuit. Ms. Rossman has spent the majority of her career in public service, representing criminal defendants who cannot afford counsel oftentimes. She would be one of very few Federal public defenders on the entire Federal bench, bringing both personal and professional diversity to our courts at a time when we need to strengthen the public's trust in the Federal judiciary.

In addition to Ms. Rossman's confirmation, Senate Democrats are working to confirm many other nominees for a critical number of Agencies, including the Departments of Defense, State, and Treasury.

Now, unfortunately, some of our Republican colleagues have chosen to play cheap political games and stone-

wall the confirmation of these uncontroversial but essential nominees.

Let's be clear. By blocking these perfectly qualified public servants, my Republican colleagues are deliberately hindering our government's ability to protect our country and to work with our allies abroad.

These nominees should be the work of a few hours at most. Many of them have been reported out of committee with bipartisan support and, under normal circumstances, would be confirmed without any trouble.

And so while my Republican colleagues won't be able to stop these nominees from reaching final confirmation, their stonewalling will drag out what would normally be a routine and easy process. The few obstructionists on the Republican side who are leading this charge are deliberately derailing the confirmation of these important nominees in an all-out effort to gain the support of hard-right elements of their party, and in the process—the nasty political process they are engaged in—they are making Americans less safe at home and abroad. They should stop immediately, and the Republican leader should admonish them.

Now, on the legislative front, Democrats continue to make good progress toward enacting our Build Back Better agenda into law. Last week, the House completed their markups—the House committees completed their markups on the legislative text that underpins Democrats' reconciliation bill.

Here in the Senate, our caucus held a long and productive discussion last week about the substance of our bill. We will continue these discussions as the week progresses.

Now, no one expected that it would be easy to pass legislation to transform the American economy and provide the biggest tax cut for the middle class in a generation. But no one in this body was elected to do only the easy stuff. We have a lot of hard work to do, and

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



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we are going to keep at it until we get the job done.

Now, I just want to say something about the news we received last night about the Senate Parliamentarian.

Last night's ruling was extremely disappointing. It saddened me. It frustrated me. It angered me. But make no mistake. The fight continues.

Senate Democrats have prepared alternative proposals and will be holding additional meetings with the Senate Parliamentarian in the coming days.

I have been working closely with my colleagues in the Senate, including Judiciary Chairman DURBIN, Senators PADILLA, MENENDEZ, LUJÁN, and CORTEZ MASTO, and we will continue our fight to find the best option available to provide immigrants with the chance at one day obtaining lawful residence here in America.

The last year and a half have shown how vital our immigrants have been to keeping our economy going during a time of crisis. So many risked their lives on the frontline of this pandemic but remain excluded from the very same benefits that have kept millions of others secure during these hard times.

We are short of workers from one end of America to the other. One of the reasons, the Trump administration dramatically cut back on immigrants in this country. We need them. We need them in our labor force. We need them to continue American vitality. We need them because they are part of the American Dream.

It is estimated in my city by some that one-third of the healthcare workers at the height of COVID who risked their lives for us were immigrants.

Having a strong law that helps our immigrants is vital. The American people understand that fixing our broken immigration system is a moral imperative and an economic imperative. Immigration reform has been one of the most important causes of my time in the Senate, and I will not stop fighting to achieve it.

Finally, on addressing the debt limit, on debt limit the Republicans are doing a dine-and-dash of historic proportions that hurts the American people and hurts our country. That hurts the American people and hurts our country.

In the immediate future, both parties will have to come together to allow the Federal Government to continue its most important responsibility: paying the bills and making good on our outstanding obligations.

A few minutes ago, I joined with Speaker PELOSI in announcing that the continuing resolution that we will take up to avoid a government shutdown will also include a suspension of the debt limit through December 2022, allowing us to meet our obligations and preserve the full faith and credit of these United States of America. Suspending the debt limit through December of 2022 provides an amount of time commensurate with the debt that was

incurred as a result of the \$908 billion COVID emergency relief bill last year. That was a bill that was passed when Donald Trump was President and Senator MCCONNELL was the majority leader of the Senate. It was passed under Republican leadership. That is the debt we are paying in this bill. The legislation that funded this \$908 billion in COVID relief was supported by more than 40 Republicans and signed into law by President Trump. So anyone who says this is Democratic debt is not talking fact; they are talking fiction.

Both sides—both sides—have a responsibility to pay for the debt that we have already incurred. It has always been done in a bipartisan way. Unfortunately, last week, Leader MCCONNELL announced that the Senate Republicans are inclined to deliberately turn their backs on their obligations.

When asked if Republicans would block an extension of the debt limit, Leader MCCONNELL, amazingly and cravenly, said that “Republicans are united in opposition to raising the debt ceiling.” Shame. This is the same Leader MCCONNELL who urged Democrats and Republicans to support raising the debt ceiling when Donald Trump was President and he was majority leader. He always comes up with some sophistry as to why it is different, but everyone knows it is not different. In fact, Democrats supported three times raising the debt ceiling when Trump was President, and if my recollection is right, at least one of those times was when the House, the Senate, and the Presidency were controlled by Republicans.

Should Republicans careen our country toward a default, our country could actually be plunged into recession—laying off millions, making it harder for people to pay for the food on the table and their mortgages and their rent. Shame, shame on the Republican leader.

As Secretary Yellen put it just days ago, failure to raise the debt limit would have “absolutely catastrophic economic consequences . . . [and] would precipitate a financial crisis.” A default would risk sending interest rates sky high across the board, hurting consumers, small businesses, and our country's ability to borrow in the future. Our economy, still fresh off the trauma of the COVID crisis, could slip back into recession and undo everything we have done to help struggling Americans pick themselves back up.

Now, many on the other side, including the Republican leader himself, are trying to justify their reckless position with deeply misleading talking points. They have argued over and over again that they refuse to work with Democrats because they oppose our forthcoming legislative agenda. Of course, what they don't say is that these two issues have nothing to do with each other. The forthcoming legislative agenda has not incurred any debt—a nickel of debt—in the United States. It was the previous agenda of President

Trump and the Republican Senate and Republicans in the House that created this debt.

Republicans ignore the analysis like the one done by the Washington Post, which observed that “roughly 97 percent of the current U.S. cumulative debt was accrued before Biden took office.” Indeed, none other than the Wall Street Journal made this even clearer. “Raising the debt limit wouldn't facilitate future spending,” it said, “and Congress would still need to raise the debt limit this fall even if no new major spending programs are enacted.”

I want to repeat that not just for Leader MCCONNELL but for my Republican colleagues. Hopefully there are some who will rise to their responsibility and abandon this craven, political move, which would do such harm to the United States, that the Republican leader has proffered. So I will read it again. The Wall Street Journal said, “Raising the debt limit wouldn't facilitate future spending” and went on to say that “Congress would still need to raise the debt limit this fall even if no new major spending programs are enacted.”

So the bottom line is simple. Let me repeat. What Republicans are doing is nothing short of a dine-and-dash of historic proportions. They want working-class American families to foot the bill for their irresponsibility, and as a consequence of their callous political games, it will be veterans and Social Security payment recipients who suffer most.

This isn't just another partisan fight. This isn't who can be more macho. This is about the country. All too often, the press—they make it into macho, macho. That is wrong. What one party is doing here, everyone knows, is deliberately wrong—at least the Republican leader and all those who choose to follow him—with serious consequences for the people. It is not just another partisan fight; it is about avoiding a crisis that would undo all the progress our country has made to heal itself of the COVID crisis.

Democrats are going to do the responsible thing and vote to extend the debt limit when the time comes. We will see which of our Republican colleagues on the other side will have the strength and the courage to follow suit.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.