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Senate

The Senate met at 9 a.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.

Mighty God, who observes all who live on Earth, we give our lives to You this day and trust You with our future. Our times are in Your hands, for without Your power we would not see tomorrow.

As our Senators travel on this journey called life, show them the right path, O Lord. Point out to them the road to follow. Continue to lead them by Your truth, as they place their hope in You.

Lord, thank You for Your compassion and unfailing love.

We pray in Your merciful 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.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will pro-

ceed to executive session and resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Florence Y. Pan, of the District of Columbia, to be United States District Judge for the District of Columbia.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I want to begin today talking about the debt limit by returning to three very frightening statistics.

The first is \$15 trillion. That is the amount of household wealth that a leading economist recently warned could be wiped out of the economy should the government default on its debt.

The second is 6 million. That is the number of jobs that the same analysis said could be lost should a default become a reality.

The third statistic is 9 percent. That is the unemployment rate our country potentially faces if we don't do our jobs to raise the debt ceiling.

Now, none of these statistics, none of these numbers need become a reality if both parties unite in the coming days to pass the continuing resolution sent to us by the House. It would keep the government open for 3 months. It would provide funding for disaster relief and Afghan refugees. And, of course, it would suspend the debt ceiling until the end of 2022 so we can pay for the debt incurred at the end of the previous administration.

Every single Member of this Chamber is going to go on record as to whether they support keeping the government open and averting a default or support shutting us down and careening our country toward a first-ever default.

Democrats will be united in supporting the passage of the CR. It is the right thing to do for the American people, and it would immediately stop

these unnecessary crises that are knocking at our doorstep.

At the end of the day, the only thing that matters in a legislative body is how you vote. That is the most important thing we do. There are many other important things, but that is the one that matters the most. It is what our constituents sent us here to do.

Now, Senate Democrats have said repeatedly that they are all for avoiding a government shutdown. They have said repeatedly that the debt ceiling must be raised.

So I want to offer a novel suggestion: If Republicans want to avoid default, then they should vote yes. If the Republicans want to keep the government open, they should vote yes.

But, incredibly, Leader MCCONNELL, spinning a tail—a web of subterfuge, deception, and outright contradictions—has said that he is going to vote no, and he urges Republicans to vote no.

This is “Alice in Wonderland” logic. Republicans claim to oppose a default, but they are saying they are going to vote for one anyway. They say they oppose a government shutdown, but they are going to vote for one anyway. They say they want disaster relief, but they say they are going to oppose it when the time comes.

So they can resort to all the sophistry they want, but if they vote no, the Republican Party will be solidifying itself as the party of default, and the American people, unfortunately, will be the ones footing the bill—a high cost to pay for Republican games, political games.

By voting to default, the Republicans would be telling the American people they are fine if people don't get their Social Security checks. They are saying they don't care if our veterans are denied benefits. They are saying they don't care if the markets come crashing down, hurting people's pensions and IRAs.

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



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Now, none of this is an exaggeration. Economist Mark Zandi, a former adviser to the late Senator McCain, wrote recently that a default would be “a catastrophic blow to the nascent economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.”

He also warned that “Americans would pay for this default for generations.” I hope my Republican colleagues heard the last part, as they are thinking of indulging in the political game put forward by Leader McCONNELL. “Americans would pay for this default for generations.”

Of course, we all know by now that the Republican justifications for opposing raising the debt ceiling are entirely bunk. They say they are opposed to new spending, but the Wall Street Journal has said: “Raising the debt limit wouldn’t facilitate future spending, and Congress would still need to raise the debt limit this fall even if no new major spending programs are enacted.”

Do you hear that, Republicans? This is the Wall Street Journal. Even if not a single new spending program were enacted, we would still have to raise the debt that was incurred by President Trump and by all of your votes.

How crass can you be? How heartless can you be? You voted to spend these moneys because of COVID—it was a valid reason—and now you don’t want to pay for it, and you come up with some lame political sophistry, trying to justify it. But everyone sees through that—everyone.

The truth is, we will be voting to pay for the debt accrued under Presidents of both parties, including the \$8 trillion added to the debt under President Trump. Both sides incurred the debt; both sides should pay.

It wasn’t long ago that threatening a default on national debt was something you only heard in the fringes of the Republican Party. About 10 years ago, the Republican Speaker at the time called the idea “insanity.”

But today, it is literally the party line—a sad commentary on just how far down the rabbit hole the Republican Party has gone.

If my Republican colleagues disagree, they have a simple option: They can vote yes to keep the government open. They can vote yes on suspending the debt limit. It is in their hands.

But if Republican votes favor a shutdown and default, the American people will see exactly who is responsible for throwing our country into crisis.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. President, on nominations. Now, on the activity happening on the floor today, thanks to the political stunts and a handful of obstructionist Republicans, the Senate is going to spend a lot of extra time today on something that is generally a routine process: confirming uncontroversial but critical nominees to the Department of State and other important Agencies.

Of all the mandates of the government, there is one that holds impor-

tance above all others: keeping the American people safe from all threats, foreign and domestic.

To fulfill this responsibility, the President relies on a vast army of dedicated public servants across the government. They are the expert diplomats, Under Secretaries, and Assistant Secretaries whom we rarely hear of in the news, but they play an indispensable role in keeping America safe. Oftentimes they are quiet heroes.

But, today, an alarming number of posts essential for our national security remain vacant because a handful of Republicans have decided to hijack the confirmation process and put a hold on not just a few but on many critical nominees.

As a result, today, we are going to have to take the long way to move forward with seven of the nominees currently on hold. We need to get these confirmed as soon as possible. And if the irrational stonewalling by Republicans of these noncontroversial nominees continues, we may need to take this tedious exercise again in a greater magnitude.

The Republicans responsible for holding up these confirmations are deliberately making the American people less safe in a vain and futile effort to enhance their own political fortunes. Every single one of these nominees was reported out of committee with bipartisan support. There is no rational basis for their delay. The fleeting gain these Republicans receive will pale in comparison to the damage they are causing to our country.

It is not just an issue of a few nominees here and there. This is scores of diplomats and other public servants who are unable to get to work because a few Members of this body are holding everything up. It is intentional sabotage of this Chamber’s operation, and it is going to hurt our government’s ability to respond to crises around the world.

Imagine if you dial 911, but nobody has been hired to pick up the phone on the other side. That is more or less what these Republicans are doing to many of our diplomats, who are often the first line of defense when an international crisis breaks out.

Of course, this Chamber, under this leadership, is not going to tolerate a few Members who want to muck up the confirmation process to make a scene. It will just take a little longer to get them done—maybe nights, maybe weekends.

We will focus today on pushing these nominees through for the sake of our national security.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PETERS). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, Republicans are shining a spotlight on the reckless taxing-and-spending spree that Washington Democrats are writing behind closed doors. The radical left is pushing in all their chips. They want to use this terrible but temporary pandemic as a Trojan horse for permanent socialism. And President Biden, who ran as a unifying moderate, is either powerless to stop them or does not wish to.

An avalanche—an avalanche—of crushing tax hikes that would hurt families and would help China; a government power grab over more of Americans’ healthcare decisions, childcare choices, family finances, and daily lives; trillions upon trillions more in government spending when families are already facing inflation—none of this, of course, will get a single Republican vote in either Chamber.

Democrats have not even consulted us. They haven’t tried to earn our votes. From the start, they have planned to use a party-line, fast-track process to ram through the Senate this version of their vision of America.

That is why Republicans will not help this unified Democratic government with its basic duty to raise the debt ceiling. This could not be simpler. If they want to tax, borrow, and spend historic sums of money without our input, they will have to raise the debt limit without our help.

This is the reality. I have been saying this very clearly since July, and I think our Democratic colleagues are finally getting it because now they are fumbling for bogus excuses. They remain confident they can spend trillions of dollars to remake the entire economy in a couple of weeks, but, supposedly, they just cannot clear this much smaller procedural hurdle without Republican help. Really? Give me a break.

Earlier this year, Senate Democrats specifically requested and received extra flexibility around the reconciliation process. They have every procedural tool they need to promptly advance a separate stand-alone piece of legislation addressing the debt limit without a single Republican vote. Our colleagues have plenty of time to get this done. It is laughable—laughable—to hear some Democrats claiming they simply don’t have enough time.

Last month, Democrats introduced a sweeping budget resolution on August 9 and passed it before sunrise on August 11—3 days. Our Democratic colleagues have about a month—a month—plenty of time to do their job as a unified government and protect the full faith and credit of the United States.

The Democratic chairman of the House Budget Committee admitted last weekend that Democrats could—could—tackle the debt limit alone, but they just don’t want to. Some Senate