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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Friday, October 8, 2021, at 10 a.m.

Senate

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2021

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable JACKY ROSEN, a Senator from the State of Nevada.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal God, Supreme Ruler over all the Earth, Your justice shall prevail. You stand within the shadows as a guardian for our Nation and world. Righteousness and justice provide the foundation of Your throne.

Lord, guide our lawmakers through this day. Inspire them with Your presence as You lead them on the road of wisdom.

May they write Your precepts on their hearts. Shine Your light upon the godly as they put their trust in You. We pray in Your sacred 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 legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, October 7, 2021.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable JACKY ROSEN, a Senator from the State of Nevada, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATRICK J. LEAHY,
President pro tempore.

Ms. ROSEN 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 Democratic leader is recognized.

DEBT CEILING

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, for the information of Members, I have a brief statement.

I have some good news. We have reached an agreement to extend the debt ceiling through early December. It is our hope that we can get this done as soon as today.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam 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.

DEBT LIMIT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, Republican members and Democratic members of staff negotiated through the night in good faith. The Senate is moving toward the plan I laid out yesterday to spare the American people a manufactured crisis. All year, the Democratic government has made unprecedented and repeated use of reconciliation to pass radical policies on party-line votes.

So, back in July, Republicans informed our colleagues they would need to pursue any long-term increase in the debt ceiling through the same process. The President, the Speaker, and the Democratic leader had 3 months' notice to do their jobs, but for 2½ months the Democratic leaders did nothing and then complained that they were actually short on time.

The majority didn't have a plan to prevent default, so we stepped forward. The pathway our Democratic colleagues have accepted will spare 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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American people any near-term crisis while definitively resolving the majority's excuse that they lacked time to address the debt limit through the 304 reconciliation process. Now there will be no question; they will have plenty of time.

Or, if our colleagues would instead prefer a more traditional bipartisan discussion around basic governance, they can stop trying to ram through yet another reckless taxing-and-spending spree that would hurt families and help China. That would be the path toward that kind of discussion.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, now on a related matter, Washington Democrats are behind closed doors trying to hammer out a multitrillion-dollar reckless taxing-and-spending spree, but we already know a lot about this bill.

First and foremost, we know their reckless legislation would hurt American families and actually help China. It is that simple: inflicting pain on American workers and families while putting us at a global disadvantage.

Just look at the radical climate policies Democrats have packed into the spree to satisfy their far-left base. The apples haven't fallen far from the awful Green New Deal. In the name of clean energy performance, Democrats want to force electric utilities to model their grids off of the high-cost, black-out-prone system that liberals have set up in the State of California; move all 50 States' electric grids toward California's.

As one group of major power providers observed, not only would this be logistically unworkable, it would also threaten to send consumers' electricity costs totally out of control. And in the words of a member of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission who testified before our colleagues just last week, the scheme would be "H-bomb"—"H-bomb"—for the electricity markets.

At the same time, Democrats are also pushing a brand-new natural gas tax they call a methane fee. It is a natural gas tax is what it is. Just as our friends in Europe are facing soaring natural gas costs and the threat of winter shortages, just as it seems Russia may be willingly supplying less and less gas to the free world, Democrats want our Nation to declare war on natural gas, kill tens of thousands of jobs, drain billions from the economy, and increase costs for our families—at a moment when U.S. natural gas futures just hit a 12-year high.

There is no limit to the harm Democrats will inflict on America to force the heartland to accept elite liberal fashions. Their legislation includes special giveaways for electric cars that are disproportionately the preferred option—you guessed it—of wealthy people, jacking up America's gas bills and utility prices in order to turn 49 other States into California. It is a bad

idea at an awful time and just one more way their reckless taxing-and-spending spree would hurt families and help China.

FOREIGN POLICY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, now, on a related matter, while Americans contend with Democrats' self-created border crisis and inflation crisis, our foreign policy is in crisis as well.

The Biden administration's disastrous retreat from Afghanistan may be over, but the danger to the American citizens and Afghan partners it left behind certainly is not over. Around the world, adversaries and allies alike are drawing new conclusions from President Biden's Afghanistan disaster about America's will to defend our allies and our interests.

Pyongyang is putting on another master class in how despots disdain the so-called rules-based international order. Literally, while a North Korean official was haranguing the U.N. in a speech about the "consequences it will bring in the future in case it tries to encroach upon [its] sovereignty," the Kim regime punctuated the speech with yet another provocative round of U.N. sanctions-violating ballistic missile tests.

Iranian disregard for international norms and the Biden administration's efforts to enforce them continues apace. Tehran is ramping up its nuclear activities, demanding bribes to even return to the negotiating table, as well as stepping up its use of terrorist proxies to threaten its adversaries all across the region.

In light of our retreat from Afghanistan, we should not be surprised if Iranian-backed groups redouble their efforts to inflict U.S. casualties and otherwise pressure the Biden administration to turn tail and run from Syria and Iraq.

When it comes to near-peer competitors like Russia, the Biden campaign's tough talk has been replaced by the Biden administration's desperate rhetoric of diplomacy. Putin is unfazed and undeterred.

Repression at home, manipulation of energy markets abroad, military modernization, cyber mischief—this doesn't exactly scream ready for good-faith engagement.

Most of all, the administration's hollow rhetoric has done nothing to deter the growing threat from communist China. Just this month, Beijing has sent a record number of military aircraft on provocative missions into Taiwan's airspace. As senior Pentagon officials have warned, "we are witnessing a strategic breakout" by China, Democrats still refuse to let us adequately fund our own military and defense.

The Biden administration's budget falls woefully short of our requirements for greater competition with China and with Russia—all the more so given the inevitable growing terror threat. And here in Congress, Demo-

crats are doubling down on this reckless misstep. Democrats want to spend trillions of dollars on a socialist wish list at home while leaving the servicemembers who keep us safe overseas in the lurch.

Now, I don't expect Chairman SANDERS or certain radicals in the House to be keen on using reconciliation to fund our military—hardly. But Senate Democrats have left Congress's most fundamental tool for influencing defense policy—the historically bipartisan NDAA—in procedural limbo literally for months.

The Democratic leader's latest public statement on his caucus's spending priorities did not even mention the defense authorization bill. Apparently, he is content to let it languish behind their leftwing wish list.

So, Madam President, America is staring down serious and historic threats. And somehow, with unified control of government, the only actions Democrats have managed to take on foreign policy have made them worse.

The American people deserve a lot better than this. Our servicemembers deserve better. Our allies deserve better. But Washington Democrats are proving they cannot deliver.

TRIBUTE TO MEGAN MERCER

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, now on one final matter, it is a small group of people who become familiar faces right here on the floor of the U.S. Senate. There are the Senators themselves, the nonpartisan professionals on the dais, the Capitol Police, and doorkeepers.

And then, Madam President, you have the men and women of each party's cloakroom. These small and tight-knit teams keep information flowing from the Senate floor to Members' offices and vice versa. They track legislation and amendments. They negotiate procedure across the aisle. And in a thousand other duties, they all add up to tense days, late nights, and a truly front-row seat to Congress.

For the last decade, one of those special few has been a daughter of Kentucky and an alumna of my own office: Megan Mercer.

Megan's Senate story started about 15 years ago, when she spent a summer as a page. Before long, this impressive young woman took an internship in my personal office, serving Kentucky; then an entry-level position in my leadership office here in the Capitol; and then Megan came here to the floor, to the Republican cloakroom.

A decade ago now, she took a seat behind their big desk. She answered phones. She answered questions. She learned the ropes. And over 10 years, she worked her way up to a key role of senior floor assistant.

Pick any important vote, and Megan has been right here in the well, at this table, tallying the count for our side. She has cleared legislation and consent