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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.

Almighty God, the center of our hope, as the Russian war against Ukraine reaches its 20th day, we keep our eyes on You. We thank You for Your might, majesty, and power. You are the source of our strength, and the hope for all our tomorrows.

As our lawmakers strive to do their best for freedom, make them worthy of their high calling. May the lure of expediency never tempt them to betray the highest principles.

Lord, use our Senators to build a better and more peaceful Nation and world. May they maintain the fidelity of those to whom much has been given.

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 senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, March 15, 2022.

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.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Shalanda D. Young, of Louisiana, to be Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

NOMINATIONS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, so the Senate this week will continue fulfilling its constitutional duty to confirm more of the President's judicial and administrative nominees. Yesterday, I filed cloture on 12 additional nominees, setting up a busy rest of the week here on the floor. Absent an agreement to expedite the process—and, unfortunately, we have seen all too few of those coming from our Republican colleagues—Members can ex-

pect to begin voting tomorrow morning, and we will work through all 12 nominees until we have a path to getting them confirmed.

Due to the months of obstructive holds by a few—just a handful of Republicans—in addition to judicial nominees, we also must use up floor time to confirm U.S. attorneys, something practically unheard of in the Senate. These Republicans who have delayed our U.S. attorneys are actively making our communities less safe, and it is regrettable they have chosen to obstruct the Senate for their own personal political interests. So my colleagues ought to be prepared for a busy few days here on the floor.

Now, among the nominees we will consider are two great nominees from New York, I am proud to say. One, we will consider Judge Ali Nathan, nominated to serve as judge for the Second Circuit. She is a brilliant jurist with a decade of experience as a district judge, and I was proud to recommend her to sit on one of the most important courts in the Nation.

I am also pleased that the Senate will also vote on Hector Gonzalez to serve as district judge for the Eastern District of New York. Born in Cuba, raised in Queens, and a Fulbright scholar who became one of New York's top attorneys, Mr. Gonzalez is the very embodiment of the American dream; and, like Judge Nathan, I am glad to have recommended him to President Biden.

I am also glad to note, under Senator DURBIN's leadership, Judge Nathan and Mr. Gonzalez received bipartisan support in committee, so I look forward to the Senate confirming them in short order.

But first, the Senate will look to make history, once again, later today by confirming Shalanda Young to serve as President Biden's Director of the Office of Management and Budget, a Cabinet-level position. She would be the first Black woman ever confirmed by the Senate to lead the OMB.

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



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It shouldn't have taken this long to confirm someone as obviously qualified as Shalanda Young. She has been leading the OMB for nearly a year. She knows the budget and appropriations processes like the back of her hand. She has proven capable of working with Republicans and Democrats alike, and it was through her guidance that the administration notched some of its biggest victories, including the passage of the bipartisan infrastructure law.

Shalanda Young is one of the most effective Cabinet leaders to have the label of "Acting" in a very long time, but it is long past time for that word to drop from her job title. I look forward to the Senate officially confirming Ms. Young as OMB Director later today.

CONSOLIDATED APPROPRIATIONS ACT

Mr. President, now on the omni, later this afternoon, I will join with a number of my Senate colleagues in attending a signing ceremony at the White House for the 2022 omnibus funding bill, one of many significant and bipartisan accomplishments of the Senate in recent weeks.

In a 50-50 Senate, it is no small feat for this Chamber to pass the boldest and most significant funding package that Congress has seen in a long, long time. Under this new package, students, parents, working families, small businesses, and veterans will see costs go down and greater investments go their way. Our troops are going to get a much needed raise. Student loan borrowers will see their maximum Pell grant awards increase by the largest amount in over a decade, impacting 7 million students, not to mention their families.

We are giving parents more help for affording childcare and seniors more help to receive care at home.

For the first time in years, the Violence Against Women Act, one of the most important pieces of legislation in the last 30 years, will finally be renewed, offering lifesaving resources for survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault.

And, of course, we are keeping our promise to Ukraine by providing nearly \$14 billion in humanitarian and military aid. This means food and shelter for the millions trapped in war, relief for the now-3 million refugees fleeing the country, and funding to transfer Javelins, Stingers, and other anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons to the Ukrainian fighting forces.

The Ukrainian people are not alone in their struggle against Vladimir Putin's savage war. I commend my colleagues on both sides of the aisle who accelerated the passage of this emergency funding, and I again commend President Biden for his handling of the crisis to date. As I said weeks ago, the President deserves immense credit for keeping the allies together against Putin, imposing crippling sanctions on Russia, and responding to a turbulent conflict with clarity and with strength.

Some were pushing the President to do too much too soon, risking an esca-

lation of the crisis and risking that our allies would not join us, but so far, the President's approach has been right on target. Thanks to the President's approach, Putin is now one of the most reviled and isolated leaders that the world has seen in a very long time.

For this reason alone, signing the omnibus into law is a major accomplishment, and I thank the President, Senators LEAHY and DURBIN, and all our appropriators and Members on both sides of the aisle for getting it done.

NOMINATION OF KETANJI BROWN JACKSON

Mr. President, now on SCOTUS, what do retired conservative judges, a group of 80 current and retired State attorneys general, the U.S. Black Chambers, and the International Association of Chiefs of Police all share in common? You might ask yourself that question. Well, they are just a few—just a few—of the many, many groups and individuals who have endorsed Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson for the Supreme Court.

When I met with Judge Jackson a few weeks ago, it was immediately clear why so many different groups have sung her praises. On top of her brilliance, on top of her experience, she is unusually gifted at seeing and appreciating both sides of an argument. It is little surprise, then, that in the course of rendering nearly 550 decisions as a Federal district judge, she was rarely reversed by higher courts. In fact, she has been reversed perhaps around a dozen times out of 550 decisions. That is about 2 percent—2 percent—of the time.

This week, Members from both sides of the aisle will continue meeting with the judge. I believe, under Senator DURBIN's leadership, every member of the Judiciary Committee has had the chance to meet with her. I am confident that any new conclusions my colleagues make about her will keep pointing in one direction: Judge Jackson is brilliant. She is beloved. She belongs on the Supreme Court. It is worth repeating the three b's over and over again—brilliant, beloved, belongs—because those three words are undoubtedly true as applied to Judge Jackson.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

UKRAINE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, American strength is not a provocation. American strength secures deterrence and peace. It is American hesitancy and weakness which our adversaries see as an invitation. It is a simple fact. We relearned it the hard way many times in our history. It should form the cornerstone of any administration's foreign policy, but every day brings new distressing signs that the Biden administration forgets this lesson.

President Biden hesitated and waited to reinforce our NATO allies with more

American troops out of fear that it might provoke Putin. President Biden hesitated and waited to send Stingers to the Ukrainians out of fears that it might provoke Putin. President Biden declined to send support and training to Ukraine in December because he feared it might provoke Putin.

Here is a headline from earlier this week:

Pentagon push to send more trainers to Ukraine was scrapped in December amid White House fears of provoking Russia.

Last week, President Biden publicly split from our ally Poland and scrapped a plan to get airplanes to Ukraine because our administration feared it might—you guessed it—provoke Putin. Predictably, Putin has not pulled his punches as a thank-you to President Biden for pulling his punches.

American strength is not the provocation; American weakness is. We need to help get air defense systems to Ukraine without wasting another second.

But, meanwhile, the Biden administration is already replaying this mistaken philosophy with another adversary. Iran watched our humiliating, botched retreat in Afghanistan. They have watched the Biden administration squabble with our Middle Eastern partners while removing sanctions from Iran's own terrorist proxies in Yemen.

The Iranians have taken the measure of this administration. This weekend, even as the Biden administration is reportedly putting the finishing touches on an agreement deal that would massively favor Iran over America, they unleashed an audacious—audacious—missile strike into the Kurdistan region of Iraq that came very close to hitting our U.S. consulate.

How will our Commander in Chief respond? The record is not encouraging. Deterrence of Iran has steadily eroded under his tenure. The worse the Iranians behave, the more desperate the Biden administration seems to be to give them concessions.

Judging by public reports, the deal that President Biden is preparing would impose fewer, weaker, and shorter restrictions on Iran than even the deeply flawed 2015 deal, while giving them major and lasting relief from sanctions.

The deal would reportedly not even touch Iran's ballistic missile program. So Iran lobbs missiles toward our facilities, and we give Iran a huge influx of cash and a relaxation of pressure.

Iran clearly does not fear that they will pay a price for threatening American interests. They must be made to think again.

Yesterday, Senate Republicans sent the administration a letter expressing our grave concerns that they are preparing once again to give away the store. Republicans stand ready to work together on a real, tough agreement that blocks Iran's path to nuclear weapons, constrains its missile programs, and confronts its support for terrorism. But if the administration