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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 10, 2022, at 2 p.m.

Senate

MONDAY, MAY 9, 2022

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.

Our God, Creator of life, we come in thankfulness because You have loved us through all the days of our lives. We find peace in the knowledge that You know and accept us as we are. Thank You for enabling us to run and not be weary, to walk and not faint. Keep us always in Your care.

Lord, bless our Senators. Forgive them when they make mistakes, and give them hope when they feel discouraged. Provide them with wisdom and courage to live each day as Your children.

God bless our Nation. Drive back the forces of evil that seek to engulf it. Release the powers of goodness throughout our world.

And, Lord, we pray for Ukraine.

We pray in Your mighty 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 proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Ann Claire Phillips, of Virginia, to be Administrator of the Maritime Administration.

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 bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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

THE ECONOMY

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, this last Friday, we learned that U.S. em-

ployers added another 428,000 new jobs in the month of April. The unemployment rate is down to 3.6 percent, which is just about what it was before the pandemic struck. April marked the 15th consecutive month of job growth under President Biden, and the United States has now recovered more than 90 percent of the jobs that were lost during the coronavirus pandemic. To put it into context, when President Biden took office, 20 million Americans relied on unemployment benefits just to get by. Now that number is down to slightly more than 1 million—from 20 million to 1 million.

This historic progress shows the resilience of American workers and small businesses that battled through more than 2 years of this unprecedented health crisis. This is truly an American success story. It is also the result of bold and decisive economic actions taken by the Democrats in Congress and President Biden.

The American Rescue Plan you will remember well. It passed without a single Republican voting in favor of it last year. That plan helped us get shots in the arms, and it provided economic relief to small businesses and unemployed Americans when they needed it the most.

The bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and JOBS Act represented a historic investment in America, in our Nation's infrastructure—everything from roads and bridges to expanding broadband and access in underserved communities. This legislation is creating jobs. We see it in the report. It is helping America stay connected at

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



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home, at school, and with their doctors, and it is allowing us to meet 21st century demands like climate change and cyber attacks.

Even with last Friday's good news, we still have more work to do to make sure we have an economy that really works for everyone. Too many American families are still struggling to pay the bills and afford the basics amid global inflation caused by President Putin's unprovoked war in Ukraine and rising COVID cases in China that are disrupting our supply chains.

Last week, the Federal Reserve raised interest rates by half a percentage point. That is the biggest rate hike in 22 years. They are trying to tamp down this inflationary pressure. We know, for many American families, a break in rising prices can't come soon enough, but we also know that the root causes of this challenge are complicated and that it will take a global effort and some good fortune for us to address it successfully.

Democrats are committed to taking action to lower household costs and combat rising prices, get kids back to school, and workers back to work. We need to give families a helping hand when it comes to the basics: medication, housing, gas for your car or truck. We need to think ahead and begin preparing and investing now for future COVID surges so we can save lives and minimize the potential disruption to our supply chains and the economy.

It is incredible to me, after what this Nation and world have gone through and continue to go through with over a million Americans having died from COVID, that we still are in a fierce debate over whether we ought to prepare for the possibility that it could come back. We know it will. Sadly, it will. I hope it is in a manner that we can control. We believe, on the Democratic side, that we should "be prepared." We weren't prepared when it hit initially. With the statements by the former President that this was some sort of a hoax and that it would all disappear someday, we just lulled ourselves into thinking it wasn't serious. Well, a million American lives have been lost to prove just how serious it has been. We need to support workers and families—healthcare workers, too—and small businesses, like restaurants, that are the lifeblood of our economy.

I urge my Republican colleagues to sit down and get real. We ought to face this public health issue for the reality that it is. We ought to face this economy with the challenges we face. We need to boost American manufacturing and jobs. We need to lower costs for families, and we need to insulate our economy against future COVID.

UKRAINE

Madam President, the last few days have revealed a jarring contrast in human decency regarding the war in Ukraine.

Yesterday, on Mother's Day, First Lady Jill Biden visited the Ukrainian

First Lady, Olena Zelenska, in Ukraine, in a moving display of solidarity with the Ukrainian people.

This is an amazing photograph. It is a moment in history I am not sure any of us thought we would ever see. Here is our First Lady, who manages to finally meet with the First Lady of the President in Ukraine. There was some risk associated with it, but thank goodness, everything went well, and at the end of the day, the message was clear: America is standing by Ukraine. It is standing by the First Family of Ukraine with their amazing show of courage.

The two First Ladies met at a school that was converted to help displaced Ukrainians because of the Russian onslaught. During her visit there and at stops just before in Romania and Slovakia, Dr. Jill Biden met with Ukrainian refugees, including many exhausted kids and parents who were on the verge of tears from the horrors that they had lived through.

She poignantly remarked of her visits in the three nations and said:

I thought it was important to show the Ukrainian people that this war has to stop, and this war has been brutal.

Now contrast that humane display, that display of human compassion and grace by the First Lady of the United States, with the actions of Russian war criminal Vladimir Putin yesterday and today.

Over the weekend, Putin's forces continued brutal assaults on civilian targets in Ukraine, including shelling a school used as a bomb shelter, which left 60 or more buried and presumed dead. Putin disgraced himself and the millions of Russians who suffered horribly during World War II by crudely comparing their struggle to his unprovoked, unconscionable assault on Ukraine. In cynically using Russia's World War II Victory Day, Putin described his war in Ukraine as "sacred" and necessary for the "security of our homeland." This is delusional. It is Putin who is now acting in the same way as those who brutally attacked the Soviet Union during World War II.

In one of my first visits to the Soviet Union as a person, as just a civilian on the street who went on a tour and then again as a Congressman, I was struck by how meaningful World War II was to the people of Russia. It was not uncommon for brides and grooms to go to the monument of those who fought and died in World War II in the cities of Russia on the days of their weddings and have photographs taken in memory of the people who were lost in their families decades before.

But Putin has now turned the tables, sadly, on this event with the just incredible, delusional comments that he makes. Here is Putin, reducing Ukrainian towns to rubble if they refuse to surrender, forcibly deporting as many as 300,000 Ukrainians to Russia, trying to erase the Ukrainian identity from seized areas, and praising Russian military units that are accused of blatant war crimes.

A Washington Post editorial on Friday hauntingly noted the historic parallel when they said:

Of the mass deportations carried out by the Soviet regime during the early 1930s as part of the campaign by Joseph Stalin to subdue Ukraine through political repression . . . they used famine.

Today, it is Vladimir Putin who is using terror, murder, and starvation against millions of innocent Ukrainians.

This war is monstrous. It is a threat not only to Ukraine but to the peace and stability of the entire world. If we are going to pay homage to the men and women who fought and to some who died—to the many who died—in World War II, we should remember that they did it to stop Hitler and to stop the Japanese in their efforts to conquer parts of the world.

We thought in the 20th century, at the end of World War II, we had finally turned the page on that sort of conduct. Vladimir Putin is a reminder that those forces of evil are still in the world.

Putin, reportedly, even wanted the Russian military to hold a victory parade in the devastated Ukrainian port city of Mariupol, but the parade plans had to be canceled because Ukrainian soldiers continue to fight against the Russian invaders. Ukrainians just won't give up. And the city itself has been virtually bombed to dust—hardly the backdrop Putin wanted for his evil pretense of a celebration.

Well, I have a message for Vladimir Putin on this Victory Day: You have disgraced yourself by selfishly exploiting the memory of those Russians who protected your nation in World War II, and you do it to defend your own war crimes today. You will not erase Ukraine. You have only strengthened Ukrainian people and the collective will of the global community to defend them against Russian tyranny.

There will be a Victory Day parade one day in Ukraine, and it will be to honor the valiant Ukrainians who sacrificed on the frontlines to defend freedom and democracy in Ukraine and worldwide.

I am proud that the United States, through President Biden and a bipartisan Congress, are standing behind the Ukrainian people at this moment when they are being tested. We are going into the third and fourth week of this Russian onslaught, and they still show remarkable achievement and resistance.

We are going to stand by them. We are going to defend them. We are going to let the world know the brutality that Vladimir Putin has visited on these brave people.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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