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Senate

(Legislative day of Tuesday, May 10, 2022)

The Senate met at 10 a.m., on the expiration of the recess, and was called to order by the Honorable CATHERINE CORTEZ MASTO, a Senator from the State of Nevada.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal God, in a divided nation and world, use our lawmakers to bring order from chaos, harmony from discord, and truth from falsehood. Remind them that You alone are the way, the truth, and the life in good or bad times.

Lord, give our Senators wisdom to provide our Nation and world with exemplary models of excellence, integrity, and faithfulness. Keep them from stumbling or slipping as they face the precarious challenges of today and tomorrow. Lord, do for our legislators more than they can ask or imagine.

And, Lord, continue to strengthen Ukraine.

We pray in Your mighty 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, May 11, 2022.

To the Senate:

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

PATRICK J. LEAHY,
President pro tempore.

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

MOTION TO DISCHARGE

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A motion to discharge the nomination of Charlotte N. Sweeney, of Colorado, to be United States District Judge for the District of Colorado, from the Committee on the Judiciary.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

WOMEN'S HEALTH PROTECTION ACT

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, before the day is over, every Member of this body will make a choice: vote to protect the fundamental rights of women across the country or stand with five conservative Justices ready to destroy these rights in one fell swoop.

For half a century, *Roe v. Wade* has been the bedrock upon which women have secured the freedom to make their own decisions when it comes to their bodies. Few questions are more

personal, more private, and more complicated than those involving a pregnancy. Few decisions should be more out of bounds to the whims and judgments of elected politicians, but that is precisely the doomsday scenario that now faces our country.

Today's vote is one of the most consequential we will take in decades because for the first time in 50 years, a conservative majority—an extreme majority—on the Supreme Court is on the brink of declaring that women do not have freedom over their own bodies—one of the longest steps back in the Court's entire history; a decision, if enacted, that will go down as one of the worst Court decisions ever. The name of the decision will live in infamy.

This morning, reports came out that the draft decision of last week remains the only one under discussion by the Court's conservatives. If the Supreme Court follows through on that decision, it will be the greatest contraction of individual rights in generations. Our children will grow up in a world where they have fewer liberties than those who came before them. The United States, which has always aspired to expand freedoms, will take a shameful step backward. As I said, this decision will live in infamy.

So when we say that today's vote is one of the most important we have taken in decades, when we say it is not an abstract or theoretical exercise, when we say the consequences would be real and immediate and far-reaching, it is the truth.

At least 80 million women live in States that would either instantly or very quickly ban abortions should *Roe* come to an end. If you are a woman seeking an abortion, a provider administering one, or even a friend giving a ride to a clinic, you could be prosecuted as a criminal and be thrown in jail. This is not an exaggeration; it is

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



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already being proposed by many legislatures and in some cases is already the law on the books. If, God forbid, you are the victim of rape or incest, in many States, you discover that the laws in place could force you to carry your pregnancy to term against your will.

This is a cruel, repressive, and dangerous vision for our country, but it is precisely the future that MAGA Republicans are working toward. It is precisely the outcome that extreme Republicans have planned for.

For years, Senate Republicans rubberstamped one extreme judge after another, plucked right out of the Federalist Society list, with the admitted goal to “pick away at *Roe v. Wade*,” as Leader McConnell stated. Without Senate Republicans skewing our courts to the hard right, *Roe* would not be on the brink of extinction.

At the State level, radical MAGA Republicans have pushed or enacted restrictions that ban abortions as early as 6 weeks, ban abortions with no exceptions for rape or incest, criminalize women and doctors, and prevent other States from offering reproductive care. The immensely cruel law in Texas could even punish doctors who prescribe certain drugs to women in cases of a miscarriage.

It gets worse. It gets worse. Leader McConnell says that under a Republican Senate, a national ban on abortion is “possible” without *Roe*. Let that sink in, America. A national ban on abortion is the extreme of extremes, and it is now possible in a Republican Senate, according to Leader McConnell. Americans should listen to that.

For the hard right, this has never been about States’ rights. This has never been about letting Texas choose its own path while California takes another. Those arguments have now been exposed for what they are: hypocrisy. For MAGA Republicans, this has always been about making abortion illegal everywhere, about making the bans in Texas apply equally to New York and California and Minnesota and everywhere in between.

For all the times we heard Republicans oppose expanding healthcare because “the American people want healthcare decisions left up to their family and doctors,” the same hard-right radicals are now telling American women: Healthcare decisions will now be made by politicians and judges, not doctors, not families. MAGA Republicans are telling American women: Your body, our choice.

These laws are far outside the mainstream of the country. According to a poll released this morning by POLITICO and Morning Consult, just 28 percent of voters support overturning *Roe v. Wade*. Nearly 75 percent of Americans, including a majority of Republicans, oppose the radical notion of imprisoning women who receive an abortion. Nearly 60 percent of Americans say they want political candidates to support access to abortion. That is why

this issue will be one of the most important issues facing the voters in November.

As Americans make their decisions in this year’s election, this question will not go away. Americans strongly oppose getting rid of *Roe*, and they will be paying close attention from now until November to Republicans who are responsible for its demise.

So to my Republican colleagues who have spent the last week trying to talk about anything other than *Roe*, it is time to go on record.

I ask my colleagues to think carefully about their vote and to reckon deeply about the consequences of a world where *Roe* is a thing of the past. Tens of millions of women are watching what will happen to the rights they have relied on for decades, and all of us will have to answer for this vote for the rest of our time in public office.

Before the day is over, every Member of this body will make a choice: Stand with women to protect their freedoms or stand with MAGA Republicans and take our country into a dark and repressive future.

UKRAINE

Madam President, now finally on a different note, yesterday, the House voted on an overwhelmingly bipartisan basis to approve a \$40 billion emergency aid package to support the people of Ukraine in their fight against Putin’s aggression.

This package is large, it is very much needed, and I am going to work with my colleagues to make sure we can move forward on this package as soon as we can. The President has called on both Chambers of Congress to act quickly, so act quickly we must. The House vote was overwhelmingly bipartisan, and it should be no different in this Chamber.

Time is of the essence because President Biden has made clear that the aid provided by Congress a few months ago is now near its end. As we acted quickly and decisively a few months ago, we must do so again very, very soon, and I will make sure this is a priority for the Senate.

We have a moral obligation to stand with our friends in Ukraine. The fight they are in is a struggle between democracy and authoritarianism itself, and we dare not relent or delay swift action to help our friends in need.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

INFLATION

Mr. McConnell. Madam President, the country just received yet another terrible inflation report. Yet again, overall inflation came in higher than expected: 8.3 percent. Inflation continues to stick right around its worst level in 40 years.

The measure that the Bureau of Labor Statistics calls “core inflation” increased in April by twice as much as

it increased in March. Food costs are way up. Housing costs are way up once again.

President Biden has presided over one of the most expensive years for working families in modern American history. The national average gas price is the highest it has ever been in the history of our country. Americans are paying an average of \$4.33 per gallon for regular. Diesel has also hit a record high; it is now \$5.62 per gallon—a huge blow to Americans with trucks and tractors, to small businesses and family farms. And, of course, it forces up the price of practically everything that travels on a truck to reach the scene of a store or a supermarket. Inflation on top of inflation.

In my home State, Kentuckians are paying 34 percent more for propane and 112 percent more for home heating oil than they were paying when Democrats took control of the government.

Let me say that again. The price of home heating oil has more than doubled since President Biden took office, a crushing blow—a crushing blow—to rural America, especially in States like Pennsylvania, Vermont, and New Hampshire.

Democratic policies have fueled this runaway inflation. Their mistakes are why inflation has hit America much harder than other developed countries.

Expert calculations say Democrats’ \$2 trillion spending spree last March is directly responsible for as much as 3 percentage points of our current inflation. Even the prominent Democratic economist Jason Furman puts the number at 2.5 percent. If just one—Senate Democrat had the courage to vote with Republicans in March of 2021, inflation today would be closer to 5 percent instead of almost 8½ percent.

Steve Rattner was a top economic adviser to President Obama. He says the Democrats’ \$2 trillion disaster will “go down in history as an extraordinary policy mistake” that put us “way behind the curve on inflation.” That is Steve Rattner, top economic adviser to President Obama.

Everyone knows where this inflation came from, but President Biden just can’t seem to admit it. He just makes excuses that no one is buying.

Listen to a Democratic political adviser, David Axelrod. He said:

[Biden] was saying, you know, everything is Putin’s price hikes, inflation is Putin’s fault. People [simply] don’t believe that.

According to David Axelrod:

They know that we had inflation before this. They know that gas prices were high before this. . . . You can’t blame everything in the economy on Putin.

David Axelrod.

So it is this President and his all-Democratic government who have drained American families’ pocketbooks. And every poll—every poll—shows our citizens understand that sad reality all too well.

WOMEN’S HEALTH PROTECTION ACT

Madam President, now on another matter, today on the Senate floor,