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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Thursday, January 6, 2022, at 12 p.m.

Senate

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 5, 2022

The Senate met at 11 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.

Eternal God, thank You for Your presence and blessings. We cling to Your promise to always be with us, keeping us secure in spite of life's dangers.

As we recall January 6, 2021, we ask You to stay close to our lawmakers. Use them to keep the enemies of freedom from succeeding.

Mighty God, have mercy upon this great Nation. Because of Your constant love and great mercy, wipe away our sins. Give us the wisdom to recognize our faults, particularly when we seem to forget that eternal vigilance is still the price we pay for freedom.

We pray in Your loving 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 senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Anne A. Witkowski, of Maryland, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (Conflict and Stabilization Operations).

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. LUJÁN. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The senior assistant 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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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 (Mr. LUJÁN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Republican leader is recognized.

ELECTIONS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, as 2022 gets underway, working Americans and their families are facing a steady stream of significant challenges: the fastest growing inflation in almost 40

years; violent crime rates continue to rise, with many of our largest cities setting new alltime records for murders; a southern border that remains in crisis; a new highly contagious variant of the virus that President Biden promised he would personally crush; too few tests and too slow new treatments on this administration's watch; and another rolling wave of school shutdowns, as Big Labor bosses continue to make hostages out of children's futures over a virus that leaves children largely—largely—unharmful.

Late last year, one poll asked Americans about the most important problems facing the country. Some were most worried about the high cost of living. Others said, not surprisingly, the pandemic. One-fifth of respondents, the most by far, said the biggest issue was poor leadership—at a time when the Democratic Party controls the entire government.

But do you know what wasn't on the list of concerns? It wasn't there at all—the fictional, scary stories the liberal activists keep repeating about how democracy is at death's door. The November 2020 election had the highest turnout in 120 years. Ninety-four percent of voters said voting was easy. Only 33 percent of Americans say it is currently too hard for eligible voters to vote. And a larger number than that actually say current laws are too loose—too loose.

The American people are not buying this nonsensical talk of "Jim Crow 2.0" or a voting rights crisis. Everybody, apart from leftwing activists and the press, understands this emperor has no clothes at all.

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



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A few months ago, even voters in blue New York rejected multiple ballot measures to soften up election laws the way liberal activists prefer. This fake outrage is just a predicate for Washington Democrats to do something they have sought to do literally for years: appoint themselves a nationwide board of elections on steroids.

This is the takeover that Democrats have sought for multiple years, using multiple different justifications. It is not a voting rights bill. It is a sprawling, sweeping takeover of our democracy. Our colleagues' bill would do things like forcing all 50 States—all of them—to legalize corrupt ballot harvesting. They would have the government send public funds directly to political campaigns.

The same Attorney General who has frivolously sued Texas just to placate the White House, whose Department of Justice tries to intimidate parents, would be handed new power to micro-manage election law.

Some early drafts of this bill tried to literally, openly turn the Federal Election Commission into an outright partisan body. Talk about tipping your hand.

These changes wouldn't bolster faith in our democracy or in our institutions. It would do exactly the opposite. It would be a civic wrecking ball. And, listen, that is before you consider that Senate Democrats want to destroy our own institution to ram this through.

The current Senate Democratic leader once said that nuking filibuster rules would be a "doomsday for democracy." Just a few years ago, more than 30 Senate Democrats joined a bipartisan letter supporting the legislative filibuster.

President Biden defended the principle in long, passionate speeches throughout his entire career. Just last year, as President, he repeated that destroying the filibuster would "throw the entire Congress into chaos." He certainly was right about that.

There is no partial or limited nuclear option on the table. As the Senator for West Virginia put it yesterday, whenever you start talking about carving things out, you end up eating the entire turkey.

No party that would trash the Senate's legislative traditions can be trusted to seize control over election laws all across America. Nobody who is this desperate to take over our democracy on a one-party basis can be allowed to do it.

Finally, it is beyond distasteful for some of our colleagues to ham-fistedly invoke the January 6 anniversary to advance these aims. Washington Democrats have been trying to seize control over elections for years. Their first draft of the legislation at hand was introduced in January of 2019. The fact that violent criminals broke the law does not entitle Senate Democrats to break the Senate.

It is surreal to hear sitting Senators invoke January the 6th to justify—lis-

ten to this—to justify breaking rules to grab outcomes they have not earned.

I am going to say that again. It is surreal to hear sitting Senators invoke January the 6th to justify breaking the rules to grab outcomes they have not earned.

It is surreal to hear sitting Senators invoke January the 6th to argue that institutions can be trampled because they would like a different result.

A year ago, the Senate didn't bend and it didn't break. We held strong. It is jaw-dropping for colleagues to propose to commemorate that by breaking the Senate themselves in a different way.

A year ago, there was a lot of talk on this floor about protecting the norms and institutions of our democracy by putting long-term bipartisan traditions ahead of short-term partisan power. Someday soon, it appears, we may learn which of us, actually, really meant it.

FOREIGN POLICY

Mr. President, now, on another matter, over the holidays, Russian President Vladimir Putin's insatiable and unreasonable demands only grew. So did Russia's threat to Ukraine, Europe, NATO, and our own interests. Putin cannot be allowed to use force or the threat of force to further erode Ukraine's territorial integrity. The West cannot be bullied into betraying our friends, forgetting our principles, or accepting a Russian sphere of influence.

Freedom's friends will either stand up to the bully while we have a chance or we will rue the day we did not, whether in Europe, Asia, or elsewhere. If Putin walks away from this self-created crisis feeling emboldened, he and others will run the same play again and again and again.

It is appropriate for the administration and our allies to seek to deescalate the situation, but not at the expense of deterrence and not by throwing our friends' security under the bus.

And if we don't make sure our allies and partners have a seat at the table, they may well end up on the menu. For Putin, this is not just about Ukraine. This is about breaking NATO and Europe and restoring Russian domination of its neighbors.

I support President Biden's stated desire to deter further Russian aggression against Ukraine. But—but—his administration must move faster to provide emergency military capabilities to help Ukraine defend themselves and deter attacks.

Time is of the essence. Moving at the speed of bureaucracy is simply not going to cut it. Neither will waiting until Russia escalates, at which point, of course, it would be too late. Because this is not merely about Ukraine, President Biden must also work with NATO allies to reinforce our collective military position on the continent.

We have to reassure our eastern flank NATO allies and deter any threats to the alliance by dem-

onstrating that 30 nations are both willing and able to uphold article 5. The Russians have to believe that.

The President, with bipartisan support, has threatened sanctions against Russia. European allies must show that they, too, will impose significant sanctions on Moscow for any additional aggression against Ukraine.

Even if this crisis abates, the long-term threat from revisionist powers like Russia and China isn't going anywhere. These countries literally want to redraw world maps and rewrite international rules through force or the threat of force. So this is why the United States must be as serious about modernizing our military as our adversaries are about modernizing theirs.

While the Biden administration talks a good game about competing with China, their first budget proposed to cut defense spending in real terms, especially significant given their runaway inflation. We cannot shirk on investing in our military.

And our friends and allies must also pull their weight. NATO's 2 percent pledge from 2014 is not sufficient for the threat we face in 2022. But key NATO partners have still not met even that commitment.

Europe must also reassess energy and environmental policies that have purchased a green veneer at the expense of more dependence on Russia and more leverage for Moscow. This should begin with abandoning the Nord Stream 2 pipeline. The United States, NATO, and all our partners can either act now or, believe me, we will live to regret it.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

ANNIVERSARY OF JANUARY 6

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, earlier this morning, I had the opportunity to join my colleagues in the Senate Rules Committee for a hearing on the progress our Capitol has made to increase the security of this complex in the aftermath of January 6.

We heard testimony from U.S. Capitol Chief of Police Thomas Manger, who in his first 6 months has done an outstanding job to make this building safer and better prepared for the sorts of horrors that befell this hallowed space only 1 year ago this week.

That day, on January 6, 2021, the men and women of our Capitol Police stood on the frontlines of the unimaginable: a violent assault upon the U.S. Capitol instigated by former President Trump and carried out by a mob of radicals looking to halt the peaceful transfer of power. That day, our Capitol policemen were outnumbered and underequipped. Yet their bravery and quick thinking saved many lives and prevented a violent riot from becoming something even worse. Today, we honor all those who stepped up that day, especially those whom we have lost in the aftermath.

In the year since that attack, we have gotten a lot of things done in the Senate to strengthen our Capitol Police Force, to ensure from a security