



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 117th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 168

WASHINGTON, WEDNESDAY, JULY 20, 2022

No. 120

Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable BEN RAY LUJÁN, a Senator from the State of New Mexico.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal Redeemer, answer us in seasons of trouble. Send us Your help from Your sacred hills. Our souls long for You, for we find strength and joy in Your presence. Lord, increase our faith, and teach us to trust You even during life's storms.

When our Senators endure dark nights of the soul, enable them to find strength in Your presence. May they claim Your promise that You will never leave or forsake them and that nothing can separate them from Your love. Help them seek in every undertaking to know and do Your will.

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, July 20, 2022.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby

appoint the Honorable BEN RAY LUJÁN, a Senator from the State of New Mexico, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATRICK J. LEAHY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. LUJÁN 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 to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Gregory Brian Williams, of Delaware, to be United States District Judge for the District of Delaware.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

DISCLOSE ACT

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, today, with our country facing an inflation crisis, a violent crime crisis, and a functionally open southern border, our Democratic colleagues are choosing to focus on chilling Americans' First Amendment rights and enabling more harassment of citizens for their private views.

Way back in 1958, the NAACP fought Alabama's attorney general, a segrega-

tionist Democrat, all the way to the Supreme Court to defend the bedrock American liberty of associational privacy—associational privacy. Here is what Justice Harlan said for the majority back then:

Inviolability of privacy in group association may in many circumstances be indispensable to preservation of freedom of association, particularly where a group espouses dissident beliefs.

As the majority opinion put it, this was "hardly a novel exception," even back in 1958. And yet, for most of my career, I have had to push back against Democrats' repeated attempts to unlearn this fundamental constitutional lesson. I have repeatedly defended Americans' right to join together and to voice their opinions.

Prior to McCain-Feingold, almost all money in politics ran through candidates and party committees. I warned that placing unconstitutional restrictions on speech in that bill was like putting a rock on Jell-O—it wouldn't quash political speech; it would just displace it. And the Supreme Court has consistently reaffirmed that point in case after case, upholding free speech.

Our Democratic colleagues' obsession with regulating political speech is what created the environment they now disprove of. It is what drove support for McCain-Feingold, and it is what spawned this perennial bill in 2010.

Democrats want to pass a law that puts discourse in the hands of the mob. But needless to say, they haven't always been very concerned with compelling disclosure using laws on the books.

Existing law already requires disclosure of donations to PACs and other outside groups with the intention of influencing Federal elections. But even as our colleagues have introduced successive versions of the DISCLOSE Act, enterprising activist liberals have taken it upon themselves to name and shame conservatives by "outing" their

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



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private contributions illegally. It was practically administration policy during the Obama-Biden IRS.

And for those keeping score, Washington Democrats never seemed as eager to publicize the donor rolls of groups whose political views they happen to share. Somehow, donor privacy for organizations pursuing liberal causes is sacrosanct, but donor privacy for groups with conservative beliefs is a threat to democracy.

Somehow working for outside groups is practically a prerequisite for a West Wing job under a Democratic President, but association with groups Democrats don't like is a one-way ticket to picketing and harassment. Sixty-four years ago, the Supreme Court said the link between freedom of association and the freedom of speech was "beyond debate." But today's Democratic Party wants to make sure the threat to associational privacy is every bit as real—as real—as it was in 1958.

The stakes are so clear; even liberal groups like the ACLU have joined the NAACP and Senate Republicans in continuing to sound the alarm—ACLU, NAACP, and Senate Republicans aligned, sounding the alarm. They have been working together to fight State-level public disclosure laws all the way to the Supreme Court.

Last year, the Court sided with those advocates to strike down predatory disclosure practices out in California. Earlier this month, the Ninth Circuit did the same to an unconstitutionally vague disclosure law out in Montana.

Meanwhile, the Federal judiciary itself is contending with particularly outrageous threats from the radical left to the privacy and security of the judges themselves and their families.

The same liberal groups stoking mob intimidation outside the homes of Supreme Court Justices are the ones most eager to put out private citizens' political speech records.

The same Democrats who refused to condemn naked threats against public officials earlier this summer once again want to expand the Federal Government's power to threaten private citizens. That is not a trade the American people or their Constitution can afford to make.

ENERGY AND FOREIGN POLICY

Mr. President, now on another matter, right now, Washington Democrats are frustrated by the pace of the radical green transformation they envision for our country. They are having trouble getting enough Senators to agree to make the most reliable and abundant forms of American energy more expensive for working Americans.

Energy prices are rising faster than at any point since 1980. Gasoline is nearly 60 percent more expensive than it was last summer. Natural gas is up nearly 40 percent in the same timeframe.

Washington Democrats have surveyed this scene and decided it is the perfect time—perfect time—to hike taxes on American energy, reviving a

failed tax from the 1980s on American oil refineries and exporters and—listen to this—increasing it by nearly 60 percent, new sky-high fees on American natural gas producers and more pain at the pump for working families. It is an insane proposition.

But there does appear to be an exception. If you are not among the 75 percent of Americans who say inflation has caused you financial hardship, and you happen to have a spare \$80,000 lying around, Washington Democrats want to give you a green energy tax credit if you buy an electric vehicle made with Chinese supply chains. This is what Washington Democrats are trying to do with their one-party control of government, and they are hoping President Biden will declare a national emergency to help them do it faster.

Well, unfortunately for the far left, the President is occupied with a climate conundrum of his own. On the campaign trail, Candidate Biden left no room for doubt that he had bought his party's radical climate dogma, whole hog. This is what he said back then:

I guarantee you we are going to end fossil fuel.

"End fossil fuel." Sure enough, his first year in office was an all-out assault on American energy, just like green activists drew it up—day 1 bans on energy exploration; canceling a safe, efficient pipeline that was set to create American jobs; and ghoulish, reanimated regulations from the War on Coal.

But unlike the radical base that is frustrated their ideas aren't moving faster, the Biden administration now appears to be concerned that their assault on American energy has actually worked too quickly.

Americans have seen gas prices double on this President's watch. Sky-high diesel is driving other prices up all across the country, and big majorities of Americans don't like what Democrats are doing about it. But rather than call off the onslaught and clear the way for a return to domestic energy dominance, the Biden administration has dispatched officials to beg other countries to take over America's share of the market for reliable energy that the President has purposely abandoned. They have literally chosen places like Venezuela over States like Pennsylvania or Texas or Alaska.

Then, on a trip to oil-rich Saudi Arabia, President Biden announced that "I'm doing all I can to increase [oil] supply for the United States of America."

The President who promised he would "end fossil fuels" thinks that finding more energy for American families means flying to the Middle East and asking politely instead of unleashing our own production right here at home.

And for the record, U.S. producers extract oil and gas in a far, far more environmentally friendly manner than many of their competitors overseas. So if the priority is reducing our environ-

mental impact, outsourcing seems more than a little bit shortsighted.

So, Mr. President, if the Biden administration really is serious about helping American consumers, then they will stop waging war on American producers. If they are serious, they will call off Democrats' plan to tax reliable American energy into extinction.

For the sake of working families who are struggling to fill their gas tanks and keep the lights on, I hope they get serious sometime soon.

NATO

Mr. President, on yet another matter, yesterday, a day after the House overwhelmingly passed a resolution welcoming Finland and Sweden's application to join NATO, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee discharged the treaty protocols required to ratify their accession, without objection. I am grateful to Ranking Member RISCCH, Chairman MENENDEZ, and our colleagues on the committee for taking this swift, bipartisan action. The Senate is now one step closer to fulfilling its role in a historic process that will further strengthen the most successful military alliance the world has ever seen.

Bringing these strong, modern countries into NATO will not just strengthen the alliance; it will make America more secure. I hope the Democratic leader will waste no time—none—in bringing these protocols before the full Senate.

I have been a strong advocate for American global leadership and our transatlantic partnerships throughout my career. They have made possible the unprecedented era of peace and prosperity Americans have experienced in my lifetime.

NATO is at its best when allies share the burden of our collective security, when we all have skin in the game. NATO allies recognized in 2014, after prodding by American Presidents from both parties, that they needed to invest more in capabilities to keep pace with growing threats.

During the previous administration, current member states made progress toward the 2-percent pledge. Finland, for its part, already spends 2 percent of its GDP on defense, and Sweden has the same target in its sights. For years, both countries have participated actively in NATO exercises. They have cultivated professional fighting forces, invested in cutting-edge interoperable technologies, and built robust military-industrial bases with strong connections to our own.

I know from my own conversation with the leaders of Finland and Sweden that they are sober about the threats we face, committed to building their own defense capabilities, and serious about their responsibilities to contribute to our collective security. Together, they have set an example that many current treaty allies would do well to follow.