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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable JACKY ROSEN, a Senator from the State of Nevada.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Lord of our destiny, whose commands enable us to experience rich and satisfying living, we thank You for today's National Prayer Breakfast where we were told to please You by doing justice, loving mercy, and walking with humility.

Inspire our lawmakers to strive to meet these celestial expectations. Enlighten their hearts with Your wisdom that leads to fairness. Give them civility of demeanor and decisiveness of character that brings mercy. Clothe them with Your humility and provide them with the gift of Your peace as they seek to represent You.

We pray in Your righteous 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, February 3, 2022.

To the Senate:

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

appoint the Honorable JACKY ROSEN, a Senator from the State of Nevada, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATRICK J. LEAHY,
President pro tempore.

Ms. ROSEN 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 Alexandra Baker, of New Jersey, to be a Deputy Under Secretary of Defense.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

SYRIA

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, earlier this morning, Americans learned that, thanks to the skill and bravery of our Armed Forces, we have taken off the battlefield the world leader of ISIS. I want to thank the incredible work of our brave military servicemembers who work day and night to keep Americans safe. So many have suffered at the brutal hand of ISIS.

Senators will learn more about the operation later this morning during

our classified, all-Senators briefing with Secretary Austin and other senior administration officials.

BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

Madam President, on USICA and the America COMPETES Act, in the first year under President Biden and the Senate Democratic majority, America saw its strongest economic growth in decades, including increases in wages—very, very important to the American people, who have not seen enough of that over the last two decades.

This week, Congress is taking a major step to build on that success by advancing legislation that will help lower costs, relieve U.S. supply chains, and bring manufacturing back to the United States.

Over the next 2 days, the House will debate and vote to pass a companion bill to the Senate's U.S. Innovation and Competition Act, which we approved last summer, of course, with strong bipartisan support. I am pleased the House is taking this important step.

I have been pushing for months for progress on this legislation to strengthen supply chains and boost our technological competitiveness. Senators from both sides of the aisle want to see a competition and technology bill finally enacted. After this week, we will hopefully be one step closer to achieving that goal.

Americans are demanding bold solutions to help lower the cost of living, and businesses from coast to coast need help to relieve supply chains strained by the pandemic. Legislation along the lines of USICA is just what the doctor ordered. It would provide the long-term help our country needs to lower costs and help businesses grow right here at home—jobs here in America, not overseas.

One of the best examples of why this bill is needed is our Nation's dangerous chip shortage. The shortage has sent shock waves across the economy,

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



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hamstringing the production of everything from cars, cell phones, refrigerators, medical devices, and equipment used by our military. It has increased the cost of all of those items, and American families are paying for those costs.

USICA would help relieve them and make sure these supply chain bottlenecks are relieved. Our proposal would provide \$52 billion to help relieve those supply chain pressures and bring production back to America. Instead of relying on other countries for our chips, let's bring these jobs back home.

Typically, it is America that provides the research, the R&D in cutting-edge chips, but somehow this country has allowed them all to be made—or the vast majority of them to be made overseas. Let's make them here with good manufacturing jobs, in addition to making sure we stay at the top of the game in terms of research. USICA does both—increases R&D and increases manufacturing jobs—all here in America.

So I want to commend my colleagues for pushing this legislation forward. Of course, we will have much more work to do to bridge our two proposals together, but the House's vote this week sets us on a necessary course to passing these policies into law.

SUPREME COURT NOMINATION

Madam President, on SCOTUS, yesterday, I met with President Biden at the White House to discuss a broad range of issues on the Democratic agenda. One of the most important matters we covered was his intention to nominate the first Black woman Justice to the Supreme Court. I reiterated the same commitment I have made all week: When President Biden makes his nominee known to the Nation, I will move to have the Senate consider and confirm her as soon as possible.

I will see to it that the process is fair, that Members on both sides of the aisle can evaluate questions and get to know the nominee, but we will also move quickly. Everything seems to be on track to get that done, to move the nominee quickly through the Congress.

President Biden is not expected to announce his nominee for a few weeks, but we already know one thing: The President's pledge to name a Black woman to the Supreme Court is historic. There have been 115 Justices who have sat on the Court since 1789. Only five of them have ever been women—none until 1981. Only two have been African American. But never, never has there been an African-American woman, who still make up a bare 6 percent of the Federal judiciary. And—amazing—until 1981, this powerful body, the Supreme Court, was almost all White men. Imagine. America wasn't all White men in 1981—or ever.

Under President Biden and this Senate majority, we are taking historic steps to make the courts look more like the country they serve by confirming highly qualified, diverse nomi-

nees. A quarter—a quarter—of all African-American women who sit on the Federal bench were nominated by this administration and approved by this Senate.

Just hear that. Twenty-five percent of African-American women who sit on the Federal bench came through the Senate this year. That is the progress we have made in a relatively short amount of time.

In fact, nearly 70 percent of all the President's nominees have been non-White, dwarfing the record of every single President since at least Jimmy Carter.

Some say: Well, why is that? Because the Bench has been almost all White; as I said, 100 percent all White males until 1981. We have some ground to make up so the courts can represent America.

These aren't abstract facts and figures; who we put on the bench matters. The personal experience that each judge brings to bear cannot be merely glanced over. When Americans come before the courts and look up at those who preside in the courtroom, they should trust that those who render judgment on them will be able to understand each litigant's lived experience and bring a modicum of human understanding required to apply the law equitably. The best way—the best way—we can do that is to elevate judges from a broad range of backgrounds. Diversity, in all its forms, matters. It is good for the justice system, and it is really vital to the health of our democracy.

President Biden's nominees are also extremely well qualified. We are not sacrificing qualifications and excellence for diversity. President Biden's nominees are both more diverse and more qualified than any President's in recent history. I am proud of the accomplishments we have secured this past year to bring balance to our Federal courts.

NOMINATIONS

Madam President, now on noms progress, yesterday was a good day on the Senate floor. We held 12 rollcall votes—yep, 12 rollcall votes—on a number of President Biden's nominees to his administration and to the Federal bench. Half of these votes took place in the evening. I am glad we dispensed with them efficiently and without needless delay. I want to thank all my colleagues for their cooperation and flexibility as we moved through the large number of votes.

We want to be able to keep doing this. We want to be able to work with similar speed next time a large number of votes are lined up on the floor. Maybe some of them, like last night, will go by voice. Some of these, there is no reason to have a vote on, except a few—just a handful; not the vast majority of the other party—insist we have votes on all of them, which only lengthens the process but doesn't deter us from moving forward on these nominees.

Of the 20 nominees I filed at the end of the last work period, we have confirmed or invoked cloture on all but 3 of them, and today, we expect to hold cloture votes on the other 3.

Again, it is an unusually large number of rollcall votes for nominees who typically pass with unanimous consent. Obstruction from a small group of Republicans—only a small group; not the majority; not close to the majority—has forced us to work through these individuals one by one. But last night, with the cooperation of everybody, we were able to move quickly. So I thank my colleagues for their good work and cooperation.

BANNING OF BOOKS

Madam President, finally, once again on book banning, I want to return to the point I made yesterday about the wave of book bannings we are seeing in our public libraries and in our school districts across the country.

We shouldn't kid ourselves about the scary nature of these Orwellian attacks from the far right because when far-right legislators in places like Texas demand their schools turn over their reading lists or when a school district in Tennessee bans a graphic novel that teaches about the Holocaust or when reactionary voices hide behind claims of indecency or offensiveness anytime they attack works that explore issues of racism or identity or social injustice, then we are not seeing free expression; we are seeing intimidation.

That is what book bannings are about. They are efforts to intimidate educators and students away from exploring difficult issues, to obscure parts of our history the far right doesn't like, and to perpetuate and even champion ignorance of our own past. We don't need to look very far in history to see what happens when we go down the dangerous road of censorship and suppression. When free expression is weakened, the mob is empowered.

These unprecedented efforts by the far right to ban books that explore injustice and racism are deeply disturbing and nakedly Orwellian. They should be opposed at the State level before more damage is done to our students and to our country.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

THE FEDERAL RESERVE

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, this morning, the Banking Committee