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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable TINA SMITH, a Senator from the State of Minnesota.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

O God, who holds the wind in Your fist and wraps the ocean in your cloak, we thank You for defending all who come to You.

Lord, on this December 7, a date that has lived in infamy, we ask You to bless our military. Give our military people Your presence and peace.

Bless also our lawmakers. Give them the wisdom to meet the challenges of our time. May they not grow weary in their efforts to find common ground. Lord, provide them with the strengthening joy of Your spirit, that they may have courage for hard times and determination for challenging tasks.

We pray in Your strong 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, December 7, 2022.

To the Senate:

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

appoint the Honorable TINA SMITH, a Senator from the State of Minnesota, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATRICK J. LEAHY,
President pro tempore.

Ms. SMITH 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 Jeffery Paul Hopkins, of Ohio, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of Ohio.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, yesterday evening, the Senate and House Armed Services Committee released its strong, bipartisan National Defense Authorization Act.

As Republicans have said for months, and I repeated yesterday, our servicemembers, commanders, and civilian leaders should not have had to wait until mid-December to gain certainty for a fiscal year that is already more

than 2 months over. We have to take our national defense military modernization, and defense industrial base as seriously as our rivals take theirs.

Fortunately, this strong, bipartisan NDAA is a huge step in that direction. The bill tees up a significant and badly needed increase in defense funding—\$45 billion above President Biden's insufficient request and roughly \$75 billion over last year's level. Once again, Congress agreed on a bipartisan basis that President Biden's defense budget request was anemic and insufficient.

This NDAA authorizes crucial projects like nuclear modernization. It directs critical investments in our defense industrial base so America can both defend ourselves and remain the arsenal of democracy for the world. It delivers for our servicemembers, their families, and our military installations and communities around the country.

Thanks to the leadership from our colleague Senator BLACKBURN, among others, this NDAA will repeal the President's military vaccine mandate—a policy which this Democratic administration had stubbornly clung to, even as it had clearly undermined readiness and hurt retention.

And just as Republicans insisted, just as our servicemembers deserve, this NDAA is not getting dragged down by unrelated liberal nonsense. Good, smart policies were kept in, and unrelated nonsense, like easier financing for illegal drugs, was kept out.

I am glad this Democratic-led Congress finally realized that defending America is a basic governing duty. It is not some Republican priority that Democrats can demand unrelated goodies to be wheedled into.

Neither party, let alone a sitting President's party, can ever have the mindset that they need to be goaded or bartered into supporting our troops. We made it clear we wouldn't be going down that road; our Democratic colleagues finally accepted it; and Senators REED and INHOFE did a great job landing the plane.

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



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Now, that same lesson must carry over into our subsequent conversations about government funding. Democrats must be ready to actually fund the national defense, which this bipartisan NDAA authorizes.

Just like on this bill, neither party has any standing to demand unrelated goodies in exchange for doing our job and funding defense. And let's hope this new acceptance of reality also helps shape President Biden's next defense budget request. We have yet to see a proposed budget from this administration that takes growing threats very seriously.

Why do bipartisan majorities in Congress keep having to force this Commander in Chief to adequately resource our Armed Forces?

Today is December 7, the anniversary of Pearl Harbor. No American wants us to ever receive another painful reminder like December 7 or September 11 of the painful price we pay when we let our guard down, soften our defenses, or diminish our worldwide presence.

This strong NDAA is one important step in keeping our guard up. But only one. We need to put it on the President's desk quickly and then stay equally serious on this subject.

TRIBUTE TO JAMES M. INHOFE

Madam President, now, on a related matter, the annual defense bill I just discussed will carry the name of one of our most senior and distinguished colleagues this year—the outstanding Armed Services Committee ranking member to whose career it will provide the perfect capstone.

Senator JIM INHOFE's often soft-spoken manner and unflinching humility are a pair of traits that have combined to produce one of the most effective legislators I have ever had the privilege of working with.

At the same time, over the same one career, JIM's name has come to me in both steady, solid, conservative constancy here at home and relentless energy as a globetrotter dealmaker. The mixture has left his home State, our entire Nation, and faraway lands all changed for the better.

The roots of JIM's conservative bonafides aren't hard to trace. In fact, the story of his entry into politics is a familiar one for millions of Americans.

There was honorable military service. There was hard work and success as a small businessman in his hometown of Tulsa. And then there were the inevitable headaches of having your can-do, entrepreneurial dreams bogged down in bureaucracy and regulation. JIM knew it shouldn't be that way, so he threw his own hat into the ring.

JIM's fashion for harnessing American energy was obvious pretty early on as well. Apparently, even while he was a student at the University of Colorado, JIM got together with some classmate and filed a claim on uranium deposits discovered nearby.

This is a man who seems to have been born with a built-in turboprop.

Our friend has an insatiable drive to discover and get things done. Short stints and bouncing around were how a busy young JIM INHOFE worked his way to a college degree—by way of nine different schools. It is also how this seasoned aviator circumnavigated the globe.

JIM's conservative convictions and his boundless, problem-solving energy might have seemed to be on a collision course; but, instead, they had proven the perfect harmony: from the State Capitol, where JIM earned the trust of his Oklahoma Senate colleagues and served in the thankless role of minority leader, to a gubernatorial campaign, during which he reportedly lost 57 pounds, to the 1994 Senate race, where our friend clawed his way back from 32 points down in the polls to win back a seat Republicans had only held 6 of the last 45 years, to the 5 more landslide reelections that followed.

You would be forgiven if you assumed that such a successful elected official might have made some major compromises along the way. But you don't become famous for flying planes upside down without a strong internal compass that stays fixed on true north.

Our friend knows that faith can move mountains. And JAMES "Mountain" INHOFE has himself been moved to incredible achievements by his love of God, love of country, and love of neighbor.

Don't get me wrong. JIM knows how to twist the screws to get things done: like landing generational investments in transportation infrastructure across Oklahoma and the heartland; or protecting American energy dominance, by pioneering and then protecting the new technologies and methods that have ushered in a whole new era of prosperity and independence for our country; or strengthening and modernizing our Armed Forces by leading the must-pass NDAA across the finish line.

JIM's done it all. But in a city where a lot of people treat friendships and relationships as means to desired ends, JIM has always viewed genuine relationships as noble ends in themselves. Just take it from our Democratic colleague from Rhode Island. Senator WHITEHOUSE once had to admit that JIM simultaneously was his "worst foe" and his "key ally"; or consider the many years JIM has devoted to deep partnerships with leaders in Africa. By all accounts, JIM's engagement began not with lobbying a particular issue or advancing a particular administration's priorities. Our friend has never been anyone's tool or puppet. JIM formed deep, genuine, personal bonds with fellow legislators and leaders in Africa just because he felt drawn to do so.

But as always happens with JIM, where relationships started, big results followed. JIM's trusted status as a senior statesman and stable counselor had Secretaries of State, Secretaries of Defense, and Ambassadors seeking his sage advice.

Just a few years ago, as I understand it, JIM was called upon to help ease an extremely tense and acrimonious political standoff between rival leaders in Kenya. Of course, he had known both men for years. And when the opportunity arose during the country's National Prayer Breakfast, JIM took a moment of personal privilege after praying an invocation and got the two men to literally hug each other in front of the cameras and their countrymen. It made international news.

So you get the picture: Relationships matter. But with JIM, two relationships matter most of all: the one with his God and the one with his beloved Kay.

JIM and Kay have been married for 63 years. And anyone who has spent any time around JIM knows what happens when his beloved bride calls him up. It doesn't matter if you are the President of Kenya or the President of the United States, your conversation is politely put on hold. The woman JIM calls "his rock" always comes first.

Over the last half century, JIM INHOFE's devotion to his country, his fellow Oklahomans, and his conservative principles have produced a mountain of a legacy. But I know his most cherished peak is his and Kay's mutual love and devotion and the legacy that relationship has produced; namely, Perry, Katy, Molly, and Jim, who have in turn grown the Inhofe clan by, I believe, 16 grandchildren.

Our dear friend has given generously to his country. He has more than earned some extra time with those he loves most. So JIM, thank you. Thank you for your exemplary service.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore (Mr. LUJÁN). The majority whip.

UKRAINE

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, it has been nearly 10 months—10 months since that cold, dark morning when I was in the departure lounge at the main airport in Vilnius, Lithuania, with my colleague Senator CHRIS COONS. We watched on television as Russia attempted to seize another sovereign country in the heart of Europe. I will never forget those early scenes of Putin's horror unleashed on Ukraine.

My friends in Lithuania, who remember Soviet oppression all too well, had warned of Russia's potential strike again in Ukraine, in Europe, and beyond.

Years earlier, I had seen firsthand the seizure of Georgian land by the Russian military in 2008. In 2014, my friend and fellow colleague the late Senator John McCain and I, with a group of Senators, paid tribute to those slain in Kyiv's Maidan Square just as Russia had seized Crimea and was looking to forcibly take other areas of eastern Ukraine.

But Putin and his henchmen failed miserably at understanding Ukraine and understanding their resolve to halt him and his brutality. His initial ploy to quickly topple Ukraine's democratic