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## Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable RAPHAEL G. WARNOCK, a Senator from the State of Georgia.

### PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Savior, lead us today as a shepherd. Guide our lives and inspire our hearts. May the talents gathered here on Capitol Hill help in the awesome task of bringing healing to our Nation and world. Strengthen our lawmakers as they deal with unattended needs and unsolved problems. Make them eager to lift burdens and ready to respond in service to humanity. Lord, help each of us to feel a bit of the responsibility for the challenges that hang heavy over our land. In Your unfailing love, give us the wisdom to follow the leading of Your powerful providence. We pray in Your holy 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 (Mrs. MURRAY).

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,  
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,  
Washington, DC, March 30, 2023.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable RAPHAEL G. WARNOCK,

a Senator from the State of Georgia, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATTY MURRAY,  
President pro tempore.

Mr. WARNOCK 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.

### RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

### SENATE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Mr. SCHUMER. First, on our work period recap, well, 66 to 30, that is the final count of yesterday's vote to repeal the Iraq AUMF of 2002 and 1991, a bipartisan success years in the making. That was a very good moment here on the floor yesterday—a sign that Senators on both sides want to see bipartisanship continue in this Chamber.

We can see it again if Members work together on issues that Americans care about, like lowering costs, preserving America's competitiveness, and in yesterday's case, stopping endless wars in the Middle East.

It is my hope that the AUMF repeal can be a model, a blueprint for how the Senate operates in the coming years. It is not easy, but it is very much possible, and I thank my Republican colleagues, particularly Senator YOUNG, for their cooperation.

The AUMF repeal was the conclusion of a successful busy work period—5-week work period that we just completed in the Senate—a busy and successful work period on and off the floor.

We confirmed another 14 highly qualified judicial nominees to lifetime

appointments to the bench, 13 district and one circuit court judge, bringing our total to 119 new judges—119 new judges; that makes us proud—under President Biden.

I also want to recognize our committee chairs for their good work over the past month or so in holding hearing after hearing, day after day, on important issues that Americans care about, like rail safety, the health of our banks, the rights of working Americans, the President's budget, and more.

The Senate will hit the ground running when we return from the April State work period by taking up the much needed Fire Grants and Safety Act. It is my hope that yesterday's 96-0 vote in favor of moving forward portends for swift action and argues very strongly against dilatory tactics. Let's do the same thing we did on the AUMF. We are willing to allow some amendments, but we have got to move forward. This is something that is supported broadly, as shown by the 96-0 vote.

Just this week, 29 fire emergency service groups warned Congress that with summer around the corner, local fire departments of all kinds are woefully understaffed, underfunded, and underequipped to meet their obligations to keep people safe. So, when we return, the Senate must move quickly to pass fire grants legislation without unnecessary delays to this overwhelmingly bipartisan legislation.

### MILITARY PROMOTIONS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, on the Senator from Alabama's holding up military nominations, the Senator from Alabama continues his hold on—more than 180 now—promotions, military promotions, blatantly ignoring the many warnings of the harm he is causing to our national security. It is reckless. It is just reckless.

Yesterday, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin warned that blocking

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



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these promotions “creates a ripple effect through the force that makes us far less ready than we need to be.”

Do you hear that, the Senator from Alabama? The Secretary of Defense is saying that what you do makes us far less ready than we need to be at a time when China and Iran and Russia are all causing all kinds of security problems and threats.

But Secretary Austin also emphasized another point, a very important point: The Senator’s stonewalling is having consequences—bad consequences, heart-wrenching consequences—for our military families. By blocking these promotions, the Senator from Alabama is blocking pay raises for these officers and their families. By blocking these promotions, the Senator from Alabama is blocking military kids from starting at new schools, setting them back in their educations.

When a member of the military serves, their family serves, too. Does the Senator from Alabama understand the disruption and chaos he is causing for military families?

These are people serving us. They are not political. They have worked hard. They have done a good job. They got a promotion. A promotion means moving—a change of venue, a change of school. It means a career path—how long you have been at one rank and then to another.

The Senator from Alabama is playing havoc with so many military families, who are nonpolitical, who have served our country well, who thought they were ready for promotions until this cruel act of the Senator from Alabama stopped them. These military families have done nothing—nothing—to deserve the disrespect and disdain shown by the Senator from Alabama. It is insulting to our servicemembers that one Senator—just one—is holding up what has long been a routine and non-partisan process.

Again, I urge my colleague from Alabama to think this through and stand down. We understand he has passion on the issue. We disagree with it vehemently; so do most Americans. But passion on the issue is not an excuse for causing havoc in the military in terms of force and in terms of the lives of the families.

I would again plead with my Republican colleagues, whether it is public or private, to go to the Senator from Alabama and dissuade him from his folly.

#### BUDGET AND DEBT CEILING

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, on the budget and debt ceiling and “show us your plan,” House Republicans are themselves starting to see why their attempts to threaten default to secure spending cuts has been a terrible idea from the start. It is not only reckless; it is not only dangerous—it turns out they can’t even follow through on it.

This week, the chairman of the House Financial Services Committee

admitted that he doesn’t even see a path to an agreement for lifting the debt ceiling, and at least 16 Republicans have never voted to raise the debt ceiling at all, even under President Trump. That is true.

But the problem here isn’t that there isn’t a path. Of course, there is a path. It is staring Republicans in the face. The solution is what we Democrats have said from the start: Instead of threatening default, instead of brinksmanship, Republicans should work with us on a clean extension of the debt ceiling. We did it three times under Donald Trump. We have already done it under President Biden, and we should do it again.

If Republicans want to push a separate discussion on the budget, that is their prerogative. In fact, it has been done many times by both parties in the past. But the Republicans would be reckless to take the full faith and credit of the United States hostage in order to force a conversation on the budget, particularly when there is an alternative tried-and-true path that has been used before: Separate the debt ceiling and raising the ability of us to pay our debts and discuss things on the budget—on taxes and on spending—which we always do. It is tying the two together that is reckless.

So it is becoming clearer and clearer to Republicans themselves—even those in the House—that the only legitimate path forward is this: Let’s have a bipartisan and clean extension of the debt ceiling, as we have done many times before, and then Republicans can push a separate discussion on the budget.

The American people have listened to us. A month and a half ago, I started telling the Republican leader: Show us your plan.

President Biden, HAKEEM JEFFRIES, and many others have joined in on that call, and it is resonating from one end of America to the other. Of course, you can’t sit down and discuss something if you don’t have a plan. Speaker MCCARTHY just says: Let’s meet. But what are they going to do—discuss the weather? the rearrangement of the furniture?

Come on. Do it the right way.

You are beginning to see what we have said all along—that the best way to do this is with no hostage-taking, no brinksmanship on the debt ceiling, but with a strong, avid, and passionate discussion on spending issues—one separate from the other.

House Republicans cannot show us their plan, and as we said—as I predicted 2 months ago—a month and a half ago—it is going to be very hard for them to get 218 votes on any plan.

So come on. Look in the mirror. See what is going on, and do it the right way.

Speaker MCCARTHY, today is March 30. It has been long enough. You still haven’t come up with a single specific cut that makes any difference in the debt that you want to do. Show us your plan. Drop the brinksmanship. Join Democrats on a clean extension of the debt ceiling.

#### LOWER ENERGY COSTS ACT

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, finally, on H.R. 1, the House is expected today to vote on Republicans’ partisan, unserious, and so-called energy package that they call H.R. 1.

First, once again, I want to make it clear: H.R. 1 is dead on arrival in the Senate, not because of politics but because it is so ridiculous and has been drawn up by a bunch of pro-oil Senators who have no regard for anyone else. No Democrat has been consulted. Obviously, the Republicans knew that in the House when they passed it, but they seem to want to go back. In H.R. 1, they go back to the MAGA supporters back home—the big oil companies, the oil wildcatters, and so many of the oil States that don’t want to pay any taxes and that don’t want anything to do with moving us forward as the climate gets worse and worse.

The Senate is not going to waste our time on a bill that sets America back decades in our transition to clean energy. All it takes is a brief glance at H.R. 1 to realize it is just a giveaway to Big Oil. House Republicans’ so-called energy package just guts important safeguards, environmental safeguards, on fossil fuel projects. It would lock America into expensive, erratic, and dirty energy sources while setting us back more than a decade on our decision to move forward on clean energy, which this Nation fully supports. Transmission, of course, is hugely important to increasing access on clean energy, but the Republican plan hardly even mentions it.

So, again, the way to do this, Republicans in the House, is in a bipartisan way. We have a Republican House. We have a Democratic Senate. No party is going to be able to jam its way through without consulting the other side. That is true on the debt ceiling. That is true on the budget, and it is certainly true on H.R. 1.

There are Republicans in the House and Democrats in the House, and there are Republicans in the Senate and Democrats in the Senate who want to sit down and do a serious energy package. We need to do it. Let’s stop this brinksmanship. Let’s stop this political game-playing. Let’s stop this throwing of bones to the MAGA hard right, which represents, maybe, 5 percent of America. Let’s roll up our sleeves. Let’s get down to work and get something done on energy and on so many other issues.

#### CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

#### LEGISLATIVE SESSION

#### FIRE GRANTS AND SAFETY ACT—MOTION TO PROCEED—Resumed

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the