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## Senate

### 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 legislative clerk read the nomination of Joshua David Jacobs, of Washington, to be Under Secretary for Benefits of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. WELCH). The Senator from Washington.

#### NOMINATION OF JOSHUA DAVID JACOBS

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I come to the floor this afternoon to urge all of my colleagues to join me in voting to confirm Joshua Jacobs to serve as Under Secretary for Benefits at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Mr. Jacobs is an exceptionally qualified pick to fill this role, who will work day in and day out to make sure our Nation lives up to its obligation to take care of its veterans. I should know because that is exactly what he did when he worked in my office.

Joshua came to work every day focused on Washington State veterans and their families and helped to prepare the VA for an influx of veterans, to expand clinics and facilities, and to ensure veterans had the services they needed to transition to civilian life, especially when it comes to employment. That track record is why I was thrilled to have him return to work for me as deputy staff director on the Veterans Affairs Committee later, when I became chair, and why I was so excited to join my colleagues on the committee earlier this year to advance this nomination in a bipartisan way.

When I was chair, Mr. Jacobs helped lead the efforts to get veterans more mental health services, expand and support services for women veterans, and ensure veterans had a seamless transition from the DOD to the VA,

where too often our servicemembers and veterans faced too much redtape and the VA faced too little accountability.

Given his drive back then, it is no surprise to me that the work he has done since shows his deep commitment to serving those who served our Nation and why he is such a strong fit and trusted choice for this role.

When Mr. Jacobs was a Senior Advisor to the Office of the VA Secretary under President Obama, he was awarded the Secretary's Meritorious Service Award. When President Biden was elected, he was chosen to serve on the incoming administration's VA transition team. After Mr. Jacobs returned to the Department as a Senior Advisor in 2021, he improved its decision-making process by establishing and leading the new Evidence-based Policy Council and developing a new interagency policy development process to coordinate and implement more than 50 interagency policy efforts.

As a Senior Advisor for Policy who carried out the responsibilities of the Under Secretary for Benefits, Mr. Jacobs has taken on the enormous task of coordinating a team of 25,000 people and 56 regional offices, processing centers, and headquarters as they worked to manage over \$100 billion in benefits and to make good on our promise to millions of veterans and their families.

He knows full well how important a smoothly functioning VA is to the Americans who are relying on the benefits our Nation promised them. I have no doubt he will go to work every day determined to make sure our Nation lives up to those promises.

I know Mr. Jacobs, who is a Washington State native and graduate of the University of Washington, will do great work for America's veterans as Under Secretary for benefits.

I am proud to support his nomination. I look forward to working with him once he is confirmed.

I yield the floor.

The Senate met at 3 p.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mrs. MURRAY).

#### PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal Spirit, send Your peace into our hearts. Hasten the day when nations will live in friendship with each other, united by their allegiance to You.

May the Members of this body seek to build with You a world without dividing walls. Keep our lawmakers faithful in their efforts to unite our Nation and world. Lord, strengthen them to work together for the common good, as You place Your peace that passes all understanding in their hearts. Empower our Senators to set country above party and place Your will above all else.

We pray in Your great 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.

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



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## RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

## DEBT CEILING

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, for over 2 years, the Biden administration has failed to attend to some of the most basic governing duties. Stable prices, secure borders, and safe streets are three of the most fundamental responsibilities that any government owes its people.

But Washington Democrats neglected the basics for their pet priorities. They spent trillions of dollars on government goodies that nobody asked for, triggered the worst inflation in 40 years, and turned a blind eye to the border crisis and a crime wave, all occurring on their watch.

They caused the damage on party-line votes, without any input from the Republican side. In response, the American people flipped the House and chose a closely divided Senate. The voters dialed up the checks and the balances. The people went to the ballot box and demanded the Democrats start negotiating and compromising.

But the President is refusing to engage. Even as his own advisers say the debt ceiling is approaching fast, the White House is totally MIA. His position has been no negotiation, no reforms.

It is such an absurd position that even fellow Democrats are not buying it. The senior Senator from West Virginia, a Democrat, has publicly called on the President to sit down with Speaker MCCARTHY and negotiate.

Listen to the House Democrats: "Get to work and get it done for the sake of the country," says one. "They've got to do it soon," says another.

Just a few years ago, the Democratic leader said debt limit talks were an "opportunity for bipartisanship."

And what about President Biden himself? Here is what then-Vice President Biden said about the debt ceiling back in 2011. "Some of them are still unwilling to budge . . . taking an absolute position: my way or no way. . . . That's not governing," said the Vice President in 2011.

My goodness, that is harsh criticism for the 2023 version of President Biden from the 2011 version of Vice President Biden.

The Democrats' reckless policies have already dealt far too much damage to our country. This administration's inflation has hammered working families' budgets. Their anti-energy policies have raised gas prices and utility bills. Their attempt to reinvent cash welfare without work requirements hurt small businesses by worsening labor shortages and hurt families by promoting dependence.

So the working people of this country have already paid a heavy enough price for Democrats' failures. We should not even come within a mile of flirting with a Democratic debt default on top of all the rest.

It is time for President Biden to stop the partisan stubbornness, join Speak-

er MCCARTHY at the grownups' table, and get talking.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

## RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The majority leader is recognized.

## LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

## REMOVING THE DEADLINE FOR THE RATIFICATION OF THE EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT—Motion to Proceed

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I move to proceed to Calendar No. 3, S.J. Res. 4.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 3, S.J. Res. 4, a joint resolution removing the deadline for the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment.

## CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. SCHUMER. I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

## CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 3, S.J. Res. 4, a joint resolution removing the deadline for the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment.

Charles E. Schumer, Benjamin L. Cardin, Margaret Wood Hassan, Richard Blumenthal, Sherrod Brown, Tim Kaine, Christopher A. Coons, Alex Padilla, Tina Smith, Elizabeth Warren, Cory A. Booker, Gary C. Peters, Jack Reed, Angus S. King, Jr., Brian Schatz, Mazie Hirono, Amy Klobuchar.

## EXECUTIVE SESSION

## EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 22.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Anthony Devos Johnstone, of Montana, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Ninth Circuit.

## CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

## CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 22, Anthony Devos Johnstone, of Montana, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Ninth Circuit.

Charles E. Schumer, Richard J. Durbin, Alex Padilla, Tim Kaine, Margaret Wood Hassan, Ben Ray Lujan, Raphael G. Warnock, Tammy Duckworth, Jack Reed, Sheldon Whitehouse, John W. Hickenlooper, Catherine Cortez Masto, Tammy Baldwin, Brian Schatz, Christopher Murphy, Tina Smith, Debbie Stabenow.

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum calls for the cloture motions filed today, April 25, be waived.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

## DEBT CEILING

Mr. SCHUMER. Now, Mr. President, for months, the American people have demanded House Republicans stop their hostage-taking and show us a plan to avoid default.

Last week, House Republicans failed in their assignment yet again. Speaker MCCARTHY rolled out a wish list straight out of the Freedom Caucus playbook. It might as well be called the "Default on America Act" because that is exactly what it is: DOA.

Instead of doing what both sides have done many times before—avoiding default without preconditions—Speaker MCCARTHY and House Republicans want to force working Americans to accept either a punch to the gut or a blow to the head. Either the United States defaults on national debt for the first time in American history or MAGA Republicans get their way and America defaults on everything else—on our future and our security, on our promise to care for veterans and law enforcement and the American middle class. Either way, Republicans are promising real pain for American families when they bring their Default on America Act to the House floor this week. According to one study by Moody's Analytics, the DOA could send us into a damaging recession.

So let me say it one more time. What Republicans released last week was not so much a plan as it was a threat to default on America. Either we default on the national debt or we default on everything else through extreme cuts that will harm millions of people. That is so unpopular with the American people that the Republican House has had to hide it.