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Senate

The Senate met at 3 p.m. and was called to order by the Honorable PETER WELCH, a Senator from the State of Vermont.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

O Holy God, who has taught us to place our confidence in You, give the Members of this body the power of Your wisdom. In all their duties, empower them to be loyal to You and obedient to Your precepts. Although violence, chaos, and turbulence seem to prevail in our land, give our Senators faith to believe that You are willing to help them solve the problems they face.

Lord, be their abiding reality and lead them into the paths of loving service as they strive to honor You. Open their eyes to the many things they can do to accomplish Your will.

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.

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 legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, May 9, 2023.

To the Senate:

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

appoint the Honorable PETER WELCH, a Senator from the State of Vermont, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATTY MURRAY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. WELCH 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 legislative clerk read the nomination of L. Felice Gorordo, of Florida, to be United States Alternate Executive Director of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development for a term of two years.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

DEBT CEILING

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, 7 of the last 10 debt limit increases were attached to bipartisan government spending deals. All three of the debt limit increases from 2017 through 2020 were attached to bipartisan government spending deals.

So there is no reason why our country should be drifting toward crisis. The solution is clear; it has been clear

for months. President Biden needs to negotiate on spending with Speaker MCCARTHY.

The Speaker has been at the table since February. House Republicans are the only people in town who have passed any bill that prevents default. President Biden has been MIA.

House and Senate Democrats have no plan, no proposal. They have no bill to raise the debt ceiling that could pass either in the House or the Senate, let alone both.

So the choice is President Biden's: Either he drives the country into default or he comes to the table.

Four years ago, in 2019, the roles were reversed. Republicans held the White House. Democrats held the White House. I was the majority leader. And my advice to the President then was the same as my advice to the President now: raise the debt limit by negotiating spending levels with the Speaker.

That administration listened. They sent Secretary Mnuchin to hammer out a debt deal with Speaker PELOSI. They struck a compromise. Spending levels were set, and the debt limit was raised.

That is what a responsible Senate majority leader would be telling the Biden White House today: Sit down with the Speaker and strike a deal.

Any compromise flushed out by the Republican House and the Democratic White House will pass the Senate easily. So President Biden's actions will either prevent default or guarantee default.

It is just that simple. It is up to the President.

Either President Biden causes an economic disaster of his own creation or he picks up the 2019 playbook and negotiates with Speaker MCCARTHY.

Everybody knows this is on President Biden. Rank-and-file House and Senate Democrats have publicly called on the White House to negotiate.

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



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The Washington Post—the Washington Post—ran an entire editorial entitled, “It’s time for Biden to call McCarthy!”

Last week, an entire news story detailed how the White House is garnering no support from nonpartisan leaders or experts for their bizarre strategy of sleepwalking into disaster.

The people around President Biden, including the Senate Democratic leader, seem to think they can wish away the results of the midterm election. They want to pretend the American people didn’t flip the House.

That is not how it works. In divided government, you negotiate. The President and the Speaker need to talk, just like in 2019. We need a bipartisan spending agreement, just like 7 of the previous 10 debt limit deals. I will be joining the White House meeting later today, and I will continue to support the Speaker.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. 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 ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. 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 ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 4.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Bradley N. Garcia, of Maryland, to be United States Circuit Judge for the District of Columbia Circuit.

CLOTURE MOTION

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. 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. 4, Bradley N. Garcia, of Maryland, to be United States Circuit Judge for the District of Columbia Circuit.

Charles E. Schumer, Richard J. Durbin, Sheldon Whitehouse, Martin Heinrich, Tim Kaine, Tammy Baldwin, Ben Ray Lujan, Tammy Duckworth, John W. Hickenlooper, Amy Klobuchar, Jack Reed, Jeanne Shaheen, Benjamin L. Cardin, Edward J. Markey, Alex Padilla, Margaret Wood Hassan, Catherine Cortez Masto, Gary C. Peters.

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask unanimous consent the mandatory quorum call for the cloture motion filed today be waived.

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

Mr. SCHUMER. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. 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.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, on May 4, 2019, 15-year-old Mason Bogard died after trying to mimic a choking challenge he saw on social media.

Three days earlier, his parents had found him unconscious in his room with a belt around his neck. There was nothing his doctors could do over that 3-day period to save his life. I am telling Mason’s story today, with the permission of his mother, because it is so different from other stories.

I have shared a lot of these stories about the dangerous influence that online platforms have on our Nation’s children. There is no evidence to suggest Mason was trying to hurt himself. This death was an accident.

We know this because after Mason died, his parents found a self-recorded video on his phone that had happened days prior to the accident. It shows him attempting the same viral challenge that killed him.

Earlier this year, I had the opportunity to speak with Mason’s mom Joann about what she is doing to warn other parents about what is happening on these platforms.

Even before she lost her son, Joann knew about the dangers that social media could bring into her home. And she did everything in her power to protect her children from it. She used watchdog apps, physically checked their devices, and had candid conversations with the whole family about how dangerous content can be when it is popping up in your news feed.

At this point, I want to share what Joann told me about her efforts to make online platforms keep their promises about moderating and removing dangerous content like choking challenges.

And I am quoting Joann:

Shortly after Mason’s death, I began searching for Choking Challenge videos on all of the platforms. I searched for them weekly and I have reported hundreds. But the typical reply that I receive, if I receive a reply at all is—

And she quotes the social media platforms—

“We found that the reported content doesn’t violate our Community Guidelines. We understand that you may not want to see this type content, and you have the option to block the account that posted it.”

She went on to tell me that there was no process for an appeal, no way to push for answers from these so-called moderators. The videos stayed online. I would remind my colleagues that the response she is describing was generated after she reported videos of children strangling themselves in order to get clicks.

This is one woman’s story about one precious child—her child—who died because an online platform, a social media platform failed him. But thousands of parents can tell you similar stories about how their children got caught up in viral trends or emotionally spiraled after encountering content that preyed upon their insecurities.

And while we know that social media isn’t the only cause for this decline in mental health, we do know that things have gotten much worse since kids started spending so much time online.

According to the Pew Research Center, close to 60 percent of our Nation’s youth have experienced some form of abuse online. It is safe to assume that at least that many have been exposed to content glorifying bullying, mental illness, and self-harm.

Between 2010 and 2019 teen depression rates doubled, with the largest increase among girls. The CDC recently produced data showing that adolescents are now the most likely age group to visit the emergency room for suicidal thoughts, with nearly one in three teen girls seriously considering attempting suicide.

Before the rise of social media, suicide by the young had stabilized and declined for decades. Now, it is the third leading cause of death for Americans between the ages of 15 and 24.

The Consumer Protection Subcommittee, where I serve, has produced five hearings’ worth of evidence showing that harmful content is readily available to minors, that online platforms are aware of this, and that they have made the conscious decision to ignore it. Think about that.

They have proved time and again that they will not follow through on their commitment to moderate harmful content unless they are forced to do so. So I think it is time that we force them to take action.

It is going to be a long road, and I am going to be blunt. When it comes to putting guardrails on Silicon Valley, there are a million different ways to get it wrong. But, over the years, Congress has learned some valuable lessons, and now we know how to fix the