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Senate

The Senate met at 3 p.m. and was called to order by the Honorable CORY A. BOOKER, a Senator from the State of New Jersey.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray. Gracious Lord, King of our lives and ruler of all, help us today to walk uprightly, speak Your truth, and strive for righteousness. Turn the Members of this body back to the truth that those who would be great must be willing to serve humanity and that those who lose their lives for a worthy cause will find life everlasting.

Lord, make our lawmakers, this day, receptive to Your wisdom, even amid the sometimes contention and collision of debate. Help them to shine with Your peace and good will. Fill this Chamber with Your presence and each Senator with Your power, for the work of this day and beyond.

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 (Mrs. MURRAY).

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, May 15, 2023.

To the Senate:

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

appoint the Honorable CORY A. BOOKER, a Senator from the State of New Jersey, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATTY MURRAY,
President pro tempore.

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

NATIONAL POLICE WEEK

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, this week, thousands of law enforcement officers have gathered in Washington to honor their fallen brothers and sisters in blue.

Every year since 1962, Peace Officers Memorial Day has called our Nation to pay special tribute to heroic men and women in our communities who have made the ultimate sacrifice to keep us safe. Throughout Police Week, peace

officers and families from around the country mourn loved ones and find shared strength. Today, we remind the families and comrades of these fallen heroes that a grateful Nation has their backs.

As always, I am honored to welcome the Kentuckians who traveled to Washington for this week's events. My staff continue to work closely with Kentucky law enforcement and to listen to their concerns. Like many in my home State, I am thinking especially of the Kentuckians we lost in the line of duty this past year: Officer Logan Medlock of the London Police Department, who was fatally struck by a drunk driver while patrolling on duty; Sheriff's Chief Deputy Jody Cash of the Calloway County Sheriff's Department, who was shot and killed while interviewing a suspect; Captain Ralph Frasure and Officer Jacob Chaffins of the Prestonsburg Police Department and Deputy William Petry of the Floyd County Sheriff's Department, who were shot and killed in an ambush while attempting to serve a warrant; and the seven other Kentuckians whose names are being enshrined today on the National Law Enforcement Memorial: James Critchelow, Travis Hurley, Oliver Little, Gregory Means, Mark Pike, David Ragle, and Dixon Allen Sasser.

I also want to pay special tribute to Officer Nickolas Wilt who was shot in the head while responding to last month's bank shooting in downtown Louisville. Officer Wilt was just 11 days out of the Academy, but he never shied away from his duty, even in the face of imminent danger.

Today, Officer Wilt has continued to show signs of improvement and the city of Louisville stands behind him on his road to recovery.

As we honor officers in Kentucky and across the country who have been injured or killed in the line of duty, I know my colleagues join me in thanking the peace officers who continue to run toward danger to keep us safe.

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



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Mr. President, Police Week is an important and solemn occasion every year. America's peace officers deserve our respect and recognition every single day. But in recent years, Peace Officers Memorial Day has taken on an especially urgent situation. In 2021, President Biden's first year in office, the number of law enforcement officials feloniously killed in the line of duty reached its highest level in 20 years.

Just last year, 331 officers were shot on the job; 62 of them were killed. That is a 32-percent increase from just 2 years earlier. Brave men and women in blue swear to uphold law and order, to run toward danger, even to give their lives to protect their communities. But as a radical, soft-on-crime movement has taken hold of elected Democrats at every level of government, peace officers have been forced to bear an even heavier burden.

Brave police officers have faced down a historic wave of violent crime from the frontlines, even as defund-the-police radicalism forced them to do it with fewer resources and thinner ranks.

They have continued to risk their lives to enforce our laws, even as soft-on-crime liberal prosecutors do everything they can to avoid holding criminals accountable.

So this week—this week—we honor men and women whose tough job is only getting tougher on Washington Democrats' watch. But thanks to the leadership of Senator CORNYN and Senator CASSIDY, Senate Republicans are ready to take action to protect law enforcement officers in the line of duty.

Our colleagues from Texas and Louisiana have introduced legislation to raise the stakes for criminals who resort to violence against police. Their bill would deliver new Federal mandatory sentencing for killing a police officer, higher consequences for assault, and new separate penalties for fleeing such crimes across State lines.

So as our Nation observes Police Week, I am proud to cosponsor our colleagues' work and to continue to back the blue.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant 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.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I note, when I left the Chair and closed our session on Thursday, you were in the Chair. I open the session here on Monday, and you are in the Chair. I hope you weren't here, sitting in the Chair, all weekend.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. I was.

Mr. SCHUMER. You are a dedicated man, Mr. President.

DEBT CEILING

Mr. President, as Democrats continue upholding our responsibility to preserve the full faith and credit of the United States, the position of the President, of Leader JEFFRIES, and myself has not changed: Default must be taken off the table.

Never in the history of our country have we failed to pay our bills on time. To default now would mean crossing a terrible point of no return, where the biggest losers will be America's seniors, America's small businesses, America's working and middle-class families, and everyone—everyone—who relies on Social Security, Medicare, pension payments, and 401(k)s.

Last Friday, I wrote a "Dear Colleague" to my Senate colleagues, explaining just how destructive a first-ever default would be. I warned, as many economists have warned, that a first-ever default would crash the economy, increase costs, and kill jobs—crash the economy, increase costs, kill jobs. Who would want that? But that is what awaits American families on the other side of the x date if no action is taken. According to experts, a default would almost certainly plunge the United States into another recession, shrinking GDP growth by an alarming 6 percent.

A first-ever default would also make life's most important expenses far more costly. Mortgages, car payments, student loans, and small business loans all would skyrocket. They wouldn't just go up a half a point; they would go up a lot. But the value of retirement accounts, which Americans spend their whole lives—every 2 weeks, every month, every 6 months—putting that money in so they would have a decent retirement, would nosedive—nosedive.

And, of course, if the United States defaults in a few weeks for the first time ever, experts warn as many as 8.3 million jobs would be lost. It would be a catastrophe.

No one should play with it. No one should flirt with it. No one should hold it hostage and say: "Unless you do 'this,' we are going to default" because the consequences of default are just awful.

Americans have been to hell and back over the past couple of years as we have tried to recover from the record unemployment we saw during COVID. Americans are coming back. I spoke at a whole bunch of college graduations this weekend, and the students who had been through COVID had missed sometimes a year of school or a year and a half of school or 6 months of school, but they were bouncing back, raring to go. It gave me some faith in the future of the country, but if default were to hit them and the rest of the country, wow, that would be awful.

So, for all of these reasons and many more, I insisted last week, along with President Biden and along with Leader JEFFRIES, that default is off the table.

Speaker MCCARTHY must commit to the same and not say: "Unless you do 'this' or do 'that,' we will default." The consequences of default are too terrible. Defaulting would mean that we would force Americans, as we recuperate from the pain of COVID, to go through what might even be a greater pain in a few short years after COVID had reached its zenith. That alone should push leaders on both sides to agree that default is not an option under any scenario.

For decades, Democrats and Republicans have worked out our differences about spending and revenues through the annual budget process. That process began earlier this year when the President released his budget proposal. This week, both sides are continuing to hold parallel discussions about the budget—what we should do with revenues, what we should do with spending—as Congress does every year. These conversations are going on right now among the four leaders and the President's representatives as I speak, and I am glad these conversations are continuing in a very, very serious way.

The President, Leader JEFFRIES, myself—we welcome a bipartisan debate about our Nation's fiscal future, but we have made it plain to our Republican colleagues that default is not an option. Its consequences are too damaging, too severe. It must—must—be taken off the table.

MILITARY PROMOTIONS

Now, Mr. President, another topic I cannot believe I must address yet again here on the Senate floor is that of military holds.

Over the past few months, the senior Senator from Alabama has singlehandedly—singlehandedly—hindered our national security by blocking hundreds of critical military appointments. Those holds are hamstringing our military.

According to former Secretaries of Defense who served Presidents of both parties, this blanket hold is "harming military readiness and risks damaging the U.S. national security."

But last week, the Senator's conduct, as bad as it has been just by holding up these hundreds of general officers whose lives are in limbo even though they have given decades of service to our country and whom we depend on for our national defense—he is holding them up, but the Senator went even beyond that.

In an interview over the radio, Senator TUBERVILLE was asked if White supremacists should be allowed in the military, to which he, a member of the Armed Services Committee, responded by saying:

Well, they call them that. I call them Americans.

It is hard to believe he really said it, but check the record. He did—revolting, revolting down to the last word. The Senator from Alabama's words were revolting to so many across this country.

A few days later, when asked to clarify his views on the matter, when he