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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.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. Eternal Lord God, we are reminded of Your mercies that have been of old. You have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.

Guard and guide our Senators. Provide them with the sense of purposeful direction. Lord, give Your enabling grace to our legislative leaders that they may unite their best efforts for the health and strength of the Nation and for peace and justice in our world. Cleanse anything in them that would block the flow of Your power. May gratitude to You be the motive for their work as they strive to live worthy of Your grace.

We pray in Your majestic 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 17, 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 senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Jeremy C. Daniel, of Illinois, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of Illinois.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

DEBT CEILING

Mr. SCHUMER. Yesterday, I joined Congressional leaders to meet with President Biden for a good meeting about this year's spending priorities while also affirming the need to pro-

tect the full faith and credit of the United States. The meeting was the most positive we have had. There was goodwill, an openness to work together, and it was a promising step forward.

Everyone agreed to a few important points: We must work to take default off the table, and a bipartisan bill in each Chamber that can get enough votes to pass in each Chamber is the best solution for averting default.

Bipartisanship is needed. It is the only way to go. It is the only way we have solved these problems in the past. No bill premised on brinksmanship or hostage-taking can pass through both the House and Senate, and the other side recognized that today.

Instead, we must focus on a bipartisan bill that can get the votes to actually become law. We still have a lot more work to do between now and the day we bring the legislation to the floor, but yesterday's meeting was a promising step in the right direction.

Now, I asked the Speaker if he agreed that this needed to be a bipartisan process, and he said yes. Again, this, I believe, is a promising step in the right direction. Nobody will get everything they want in these discussions, and I hope nobody—nobody—draws redlines in the sand.

Nobody should ever use default as a hostage, where they say, "Unless you do this, we will default," because the consequences would be disastrous. Bipartisanship was the key to averting default under Trump. It is the key to averting default under President Biden, and it will be the key to averting default before June 1.

I am hopeful we can reach an agreement as soon as possible. Defaulting on the debt would be the worst—the worst—outcome for this country, as I have outlined repeatedly in speeches in this body. There is no need—none—to subject the American people to the anguish of default, and I am glad both sides are making a good effort, for now, of removing default from the table.

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



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JUDICIAL NOMINATIONS

Mr. President, now on nominations and judges, today will be a very busy day here on the Senate floor. This morning, we will vote to advance and then confirm the nomination of Jeremy Daniel to serve as a district judge for the Northern District of Illinois. We will also vote to advance the nomination of Darrel Papillion to serve as a district judge for the Eastern District of Louisiana. Mr. Daniel and Mr. Papillion are highly regarded and skilled litigators with impressive credentials, and both received a bipartisan vote out of the Judiciary Committee. So I expect both nominees to move through this Chamber with bipartisan support, and I thank my Republican colleagues for working with us.

Finally, we will vote to proceed with Nancy Abudu to serve as circuit judge for the Eleventh Circuit. If confirmed, Ms. Abudu would be the first Black woman ever to serve on the Eleventh Circuit, another critical step to breaking down the barriers in the Halls of Justice.

The Eleventh Circuit covers Alabama, Florida, and Georgia, home to nearly 8 million Black Americans, and she will be only the third Black jurist ever and the first Black woman jurist ever to preside on that court. The daughter of Ghanaian immigrants, who worked her way up to becoming one of the nation's leading civil rights attorneys, Ms. Abudu is an embodiment of the American dream, and she has dedicated her career to ensuring that dream is alive and well for everyone in this country.

Throughout her career, Ms. Abudu has ensured our laws and our institutions work for all of us equally. She has dedicated herself particularly to the cause of democracy, of protecting the right to vote, and has fought back against attempts to shut Americans out of the Democratic process.

I am certain Ms. Abudu will continue to apply the law equally and impartially from the Federal bench, and I look forward to advancing her nomination today. I am proud of the historic progress this Senate majority has made in advancing and confirming highly qualified, diverse judicial appointments to lifetime appointments to the bench, and you can be sure we are going to keep going.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. McCONNELL. 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 MINORITY LEADER

The Republican leader is recognized.

DEBT CEILING

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, yesterday, President Biden took one step

toward the debt limit solution we have been laying out for him literally for months.

After meeting with Speaker MCCARTHY, the President, finally—finally—designated specific members of his staff to negotiate with the Speaker's office directly.

I am glad the President has taken the advice that I gave him back in February; that this would ultimately end in a negotiation between the President and the Speaker. It is encouraging that the White House is now engaging seriously with the only counterpart who can help deliver an actual solution. But because it took the President 3 months to start dealing in reality, we now have a time problem.

So I am hopeful the President's team will join with House Republicans to produce a responsible spending agreement to raise the debt ceiling, and I will continue to support Speaker MCCARTHY 100 percent.

IRAN

Mr. President, on another matter, yesterday, at my urging, Biden administration officials held a briefing for our colleagues on the growing challenge Iran poses to America's allies, our interests, and our own personnel.

The list of threats from Tehran is long and growing. The IRGC continues to harass commercial vessels in the Arabian Gulf. They arm and equip the Houthi rebels in Yemen who terrorize America's Gulf partners. They back the terrorist proxies in Iraq and Syria who killed an American and wounded two dozen others in March. They fund, train, equip, and facilitate Hezbollah, Hamas, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad's proxy war against Israel.

All the while, Iran has developed closer ties with China, expanded its nuclear and missile programs, suppressed peaceful nationwide protests, and continued its efforts to assassinate current and former U.S. officials as well as Iranian-American dissidents here on American soil.

The administration recognizes Iran as "Russia's top military backer" and describes Iran's two-way arms race trade with Russia as a "full-scale defense partnership."

Tehran is not deterred from terror at home and abroad. Looking at this administration's record of retreat, it is little wonder why. President Biden began his term by relaxing pressure on Tehran's proxies in Yemen and turning his back on America's partners in the Gulf. His administration spent 2 years fruitlessly chasing the Iranians around the negotiating table. And they signaled weakness and incompetence through their reckless and disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan.

And while Iran and its proxies have conducted more than 80—80—attacks against U.S. forces in Iraq and Syria since the President took office, America has responded with force four times—four times. If Iran does not fear serious consequences with such aggression, we cannot be surprised when they

attack again and again all across the region.

Unfortunately, the Middle East is not the only place where the Biden administration has met serious threats with a timid and halting response. Just look at the President's Ukraine policy: doing the right thing only after weeks or months of self-deterrence.

But today, President Biden has an opportunity to change course. This week, he will meet with America's closest allies and trading partners overseas. In the shadow of global challenges, he can start rallying our partners with real American leadership to help Ukraine defeat Russian aggression and to impose meaningful costs on Russia for its brutal war, to deter Iran's violence at home and abroad with new and effective international sanctions, and to meet China's manipulation and malign influence with resolve and with strength. I hope the President will seize the opportunity.

NOMINATION OF NANCY G. ABUDU

Mr. President, on one final matter, just in time for Police Week, Senate Democrats are moving to confirm an anti-police activist to the Federal bench. Nancy Abudu is the President's nominee for the Eleventh Circuit. Her record falls far, far outside the mainstream.

Let's begin with the nominee's tenure as director of strategic litigation at the Southern Poverty Law Center. Half a century ago, the SPLC focused its attention on fighting actual—actual—White supremacy. Today, it is better known as labeling political opponents as "hate groups." Here is how leftwing commentary summed up its so-called "hate map" a few years ago:

[T]he whole thing is a willful deception designed to scare older liberals into writing checks.

Again.

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Over the years, Ms. Abudu has been happy to join in on the fearmongering. She has described prohibitions on convicted felons voting as "practically the same system as during slavery." She said her biggest concern about voter suppression was States passing laws to require voters to have photo IDs. She claimed that the State of Alabama, which posted the Nation's second highest turnout among Black voters in 2018, was trying to "establish White supremacy."

And one of her employer's latest bits of legal jeopardy occurred on Ms. Abudu's watch, in her area of professional responsibility. Several SPLC lawyers are under investigation by a panel of Federal judges in Alabama for "judge shopping" a case. In other words, these activists filed and refiled their litigation in the hopes of getting a sympathetic judge. Conveniently, Ms. Abudu has claimed that even as director of strategic litigation, she was not involved in directing this particular litigative strategy.