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Senate

(Legislative day of Tuesday, May 30, 2023)

The Senate met at 10 a.m., on the expiration of the recess, 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 Father, we trust in Your unfailing love and commit our lives to You. Thank you for listening to our prayers. Help us to live in purity so that we will never dishonor You.

Lord, guard our minds so that our thoughts will please You, as we passionately seek Your truth.

Today, strengthen the Members of this body in their work. Use them to bring comfort and courage to the marginalized. Help our Senators to give their hearts to You and seek to please You in all they say and do. Empower them to live in such a way that by the wisdom of their words and the power of their example others may be moved to follow You.

We pray in Your awesome 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 31, 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.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

DEBT CEILING

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, later this afternoon, the House of Representatives will vote on a bipartisan agreement that will protect the U.S. economy and eliminate the risk of a disastrous default. Once this bill reaches the Senate, I will move to bring it to the floor as soon as possible. Although the House still has more work to do, Senators should be prepared to move on this bill quickly once it is the Senate's turn to act.

I cannot stress enough that we have no margin—no margin—for error. Either we proceed quickly and send this bipartisan agreement to the President's desk or the Federal Government will default for the first time ever.

It is imperative that we avoid a default. The consequences of slipping past the deadline would reverberate across the world and take years to recover from. Remember, a default would

almost certainly trigger another recession, send costs soaring, kill millions and millions of jobs—hard-working people thrown out of work through no fault of their own. That would be a catastrophic nightmare for our economy and millions—millions—of American families.

So any needless delay, any last-minute brinksmanship at this point would be an unacceptable risk. Moving quickly and working together to avoid default is the responsible and necessary thing to do.

Nobody on either side thinks this agreement is perfect, that is for sure. Nobody got everything they wanted. But this agreement still accomplishes two major goals: It spares the American people from the catastrophe of default, and it preserves the most important investments we have passed over the past few years, many of them on a bipartisan basis. So moving forward on this agreement is the sensible, responsible, and very necessary thing to do.

We are getting close to finally putting the threat of default behind us, but there is more work to do. I hope that the House does its job when it takes up the bill later today. I urge my colleagues in this Chamber to be prepared to move quickly when the time comes.

STUDENT LOANS

Mr. President, now on the student debt CRA. Today, Senate Republicans will begin pushing a terrible measure that would end the pause on student loan payments and overturn President Biden's historic loan cancellation program.

Let me be clear. I strongly—strongly—oppose Republicans' cruel attempt to deny millions of student loan borrowers the critical relief they so desperately need. We should be in the business of helping Americans saddled with student loan debt, not making

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



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their problem worse, as this measure would clearly do.

Even a casual examination of the Republican measure exposes it for what it is—a cruel, punitive, and extreme broadside against millions of American borrowers.

For one, the Republican measure would repeal the student loan payment pause—which has been a lifeline for millions of Americans—and even force borrowers to confront several months of retroactive payments from September to December of 2022. Let me say that again. This is so important. This measure not only repeals the payment pause, it forces many borrowers to make retroactive payments as well.

The Republican measure also targets our public service employees—first responders, nurses, educators, service-members—by jeopardizing their eligibility for the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program. Americans willingly chose career paths that pay less, and it is a slap in the face of these public servants to suddenly take away their eligibility for loan forgiveness.

Now, my Republican colleagues talk a big game about helping working families, but this legislation shows how callous and uncaring they are by trying to block relief that would immediately improve the lives of millions of borrowers. Republicans have tried to paint President Biden's plan as a "tuition bailout," and a "giveaway to high earners."

That is just false. Republicans need to look at the facts: Under President Biden's plan, nearly 90 percent—90 percent—of relief dollars would go to out-of-school borrowers making less than \$75,000 a year. Under President Biden's plan, no one in the top 5 percent of income would receive a penny in debt relief. So the Republican hypocrisy is enormous. They are willing to give huge tax breaks to billionaires and very wealthy people and big corporations, but now they say that 90 percent of former students making less than \$75,000 dollars a year can't get this? Wow. Wow. What a canard.

President Biden's plan, which this Republican CRA would overturn, lifts up Americans from all walks of life: students of color, children of immigrants, poor Americans, and working families struggling to either get to the middle class or stay there.

So I will oppose this Republican CRA to overturn student debt relief and will continue working to make sure relief reaches every single borrower in need.

REMEMBERING KARL SODERSTROM

Finally, Mr. President, I want to conclude my remarks this morning by expressing my sorrow in the passing of a legendary New York educator, Karl Soderstrom, who passed away this week.

Karl was a teacher and longtime Head of School at Long Island's Stony Brook School. His influence on generations of students is undeniable, as is his influence on this body through his daughter, Sharon Soderstrom, who we

all know is Leader MCCONNELL's Chief of Staff.

Our thoughts are with Sharon and the Soderstrom family. May they find peace knowing that Karl is now reunited with his beloved Jean.

I yield the floor.

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.

REMEMBERING KARL SODERSTROM

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I wanted to start this morning by expressing my condolences to my chief of staff, Sharon Soderstrom, who lost her father a few days ago. Here is what she had to say about him.

She said:

My dad truly was one of the great good gifts of my life. I hope to be back tomorrow.

I think Sharon pretty well summed it up. Her dad was a special, special person, and our thoughts and prayers are with Sharon and her family this week.

DEBT CEILING

Mr. President, back in February, as Speaker MCCARTHY waited for President Biden at the negotiating table, the Democratic leader predicted the future:

The side that's unified has an upper hand.

Well, it is safe to say that our colleague from New York was exactly right. House Republicans stood united behind Speaker MCCARTHY. They lined up behind the only legislation that addressed the debt limit as well as out-of-control government deficits. They committed to the direct negotiations that I said repeatedly, going back to February, were the only way to avoid default, and they secured an outcome that confronts Washington Democrats' reckless spending in a serious way.

Republicans stood united. They forced President Biden to do his job, and they reached an agreement that preserves the full faith and credit of the United States and starts getting its financial house in order.

Along the way, the Speaker and his team notched important progress toward freeing American infrastructure from endless bureaucratic review. They put a dent in Washington Democrats' campaign to stand up a new army of IRS agents, and they slapped actual costs on the administration's regulatory overreach.

But here is the bottom line: The Senate will have an opportunity very soon to pass legislation that reduces Federal Government spending by \$1.5 trillion over the next decade. That is \$1.5 trillion that won't be put on the American taxpayers' tab. It is a downpayment on more progress that is yet to come.

House Republicans' unity gave them the upper hand, and they used it to se-

cure a much needed step in the right direction. When this agreement reaches the Senate, I will be proud to support it without delay.

STUDENT LOANS

Mr. President, on another matter, this week, the Senate will have yet another opportunity to pump the brakes on Washington overreach using the Congressional Review Act. This time, we are up against an especially ridiculous example of leftwing spending fantasy from the Biden administration—student loan socialism.

For years, higher education in this country has been a choice. Some American families choose to cash in hard work and diligent savings to earn a college degree. Some even volunteer for military service with the promise of tuition assistance. Millions of others choose to avoid taking on extra debt and to pursue their careers without—without—going to college. It is a choice that families get to make for themselves, but on President Biden's watch, Washington Democrats have decided to try to take this choice away.

The way the Biden administration sees it, working Americans should foot the bill for the advanced degrees whether they choose to pursue them or not. The administration's outrageous plan would shift hundreds of billions of dollars in debt from the doctors, lawyers, and other high-earning professionals who chose—chose—to incur it onto American taxpayers, who wanted nothing to do with it. We are talking about the highest educated Americans, folks who already take in higher salaries on average. Apparently, Democrats have surveyed the devastation of their reckless spending and runaway inflation and decided these are the people who need their help the most.

For the party behind a long list of egregious and pandering giveaways, student loan socialism just might actually take the cake, and the Supreme Court is deciding right now whether the whole thing is actually downright illegal. But this week, thanks to the leadership of Ranking Member CASSIDY of the HELP Committee, along with Senator CORNYN and Senator ERNST, the Senate has a chance to intervene and stop the madness now. Their resolution would overturn the Biden administration's attempt to pad the pockets of elite professionals with taxpayer dollars. I would urge each of our colleagues to support it.

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. THUNE. 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.

DEBT CEILING

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, we got some good news over the weekend with the announcement that the President