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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Friday, June 9, 2023, at 9 a.m.

Senate

THURSDAY, JUNE 8, 2023

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable RAPHAEL G. WARNOCK, a Senator from the State of Georgia.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal Father, in spite of the dramatic decline in our air quality in so many of our cities, we continue to believe that the Heavens proclaim Your glory and the skies display Your craftsmanship. We embrace Your command in 1 Thessalonians 5:18: "In everything give thanks."

We thank You today for those who positively touch our lives. Thank You for mothers and fathers who make good homes and guide us to ethical clarity. Thank You for friends who help to make life beautiful as they inspire us to show great love. Lord, thank You also for loved ones who through personal sacrifices have given us a great heritage. Thank You for our Senators who labor diligently to keep our country strong. And, Lord, we thank You for the memorable page class, the spring page class of 2023.

We praise You in Your great 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, June 8, 2023.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable RAPHAEL G. WARNOCK, a Senator from the State of Georgia, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATTY MURRAY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. WARNOCK 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 ses-

sion to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Molly R. Silfen, of the District of Columbia, to be a Judge of the United States Court of Federal Claims for a term of fifteen years.

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the nomination.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, as everyone knows, this week, the United States has suffered through some of the worst wildfire air pollution in the entire history of our country.

North of the border, over 400 wildfires continue blazing across Quebec and many parts of Eastern Canada, and winds are sending smoke and toxic air across the border and into our cities, into our communities, into our lungs.

To walk through New York City yesterday was to walk on another planet. The orange fog of wildfire smoke left our city unrecognizable. Sadly, New York City had the worst air quality of any major city in the world yesterday, even more than such cities as Delhi or Jakarta, which always rate at the top for the worst air quality. And even as New York City had the worst air quality, the pollution was even worse for Upstate New York. From Bayside to Brooklyn, from Buffalo to Binghamton, my home State looked like the scene of a scary movie.

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



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Across the Northeast, schools canceled outdoor activities and after-school programs. The Yankees, the Phillies, and the New York Liberty all postponed their games. People as far west as Indianapolis and as far south as South Carolina have been impacted.

I urge all people here in Washington and across the United States to listen to local health officials and take every precaution to stay safe.

The climate crisis is real, and it is here to stay. We must take action against the climate crisis, both short term and long term.

In the short term, this morning, I am calling on Secretary Tom Vilsack to double the number of Forest Service personnel deployed to fight these fires in Canada. I am calling on the Secretary of Agriculture to double the number of personnel to mitigate the risk in the air for millions of Americans. I am sending a letter to him, asking him to double the Forest Service personnel.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that this letter be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

DEAR SECRETARY VILSACK: I am writing to express my concern for the health and safety of New Yorkers, and all Americans, affected by the smoke resulting from the wildfires currently raging in Quebec, Canada. I urge the U.S. Forest Service (FS) to double the personnel preparing to deploy to help Canada fight these forest fires and protect the lives and health of all those impacted.

As you know, the Quebec wildfires of recent days have caused terrible air quality impacts across much of the northeastern United States, including New York. Today, the United States had the worst air quality in the world with New York City measuring particulate matter 14.5 times greater than the World Health Organization's annual air quality guideline value. Over the past two days, much of New York State has faced Hazardous air quality index (AQI) ratings of over 300, levels at which all people are likely to be affected, no matter their health. This poor air quality has caused flight cancellations, restaurant closures, and Broadway show cancellations, grinding New York City, and the rest of the state, to a halt. Rapidly returning our air quality to normal, healthy levels is of the utmost importance.

Containing these fires is the best way to prevent more smoke from drifting into the U.S. and returning air quality in New York and elsewhere to healthy levels. To assist their Canadian counterparts in their fire-fighting efforts, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has already deployed one Forest Ranger to assist with efforts to contain the raging fires. The Northeastern Forest Fire Protection Compact (P.L. 81-129) grants the U.S. Forest Service authority to provide necessary cross-border assistance to cope with fires beyond a sole entity's capabilities. I ask that FS prepare to send additional personnel to provide the Canadian Forest Service with whatever necessary expertise and service they require to contain and end these fires as quickly as possible.

Thank you for your attention to this request. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

CHARLES E. SCHUMER,
U.S. Senator.

Mr. SCHUMER. These unprecedented wildfires are a crisis for both Canada and the United States, so both nations must respond speedily and forcefully to contain the blazes. The best way to ensure the United States does not suffer another wave of wildfire air pollution is to contain these fires up in Canada as soon as possible. That is getting at the source, and that is what we need to do. It won't be easy, but the Federal Government—our Federal Government—must explore all options on the table to keep Americans safe.

We must send personnel. We must send equipment. We must offer any assistance that our friends north of the border need. Over the last 2 years, the Senate passed billions in funding to mitigate and respond to wildfires. We did it when we passed the bipartisan infrastructure law and the Inflation Reduction Act. The American Rescue Plan also provided huge sums to help schools improve their air filtration systems. Today, these investments are paying off. Many schools are safer and cleaner because of the legislation we passed, but there is much more to do.

In the long term, there is little doubt that climate change has exacerbated both the depth and breadth of these fires in Canada. We cannot fully account for these fires without recognizing that climate change is making disasters like this far more common and far more destructive. Temperatures in May reached record levels in Canada, and warmer temperatures mean that forest fires often burn faster, burn hotter, burn bigger. We are seeing this play out in realtime. Canadian officials say their country is now on track for their worst season of wildfire destruction on record.

What we consider freak accidents today could become the norm tomorrow, and the more we ignore our obligation to lower carbon emissions, the greater the risks of these disasters. That is why Democrats passed the largest package of clean energy investments in American history last year through the Inflation Reduction Act, but both parties have an obligation to do more, both to reduce our carbon emissions and make sure we all have the resources necessary to respond to natural disasters—so many of them caused or exacerbated by climate change.

In the coming days, I will continue to reach out to the administration to ensure that we are doing everything we can to help contain the fires up north. That is the best thing we can do to keep American citizens across the country safe and healthy.

NOMINATION OF DILAWAR SYED

Now, on nominations, Mr. President, today, the Senate will vote to confirm Dilawar Syed to serve as the No. 2 person at the Small Business Administration.

Mr. Syed's confirmation is great news for small businesses across the country because there is no better person to serve the interests of small busi-

ness than someone who is a successful business owner himself.

The SBA has not had a Senate-confirmed Deputy for more than 5 years, and Mr. Syed is exactly the right person for the job. His nomination is backed by more than 200 civic, government, higher education, and business groups and leaders, including the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the Small Business Roundtable.

Mr. Syed is an American success story. He came to this country from Pakistan and amassed a remarkably successful career as an executive at Yahoo!, as the president of a software company, and most recently as the CEO of a healthcare AI company. So Mr. Syed is more than qualified to assume the post of Deputy SBA Administrator, where his job will be in helping millions of small businesses get the resources they need to start, to grow, to expand.

And, once confirmed, Mr. Syed will add to the dynamism and diversity of the Biden administration as the highest ranking Muslim official in the executive branch.

This is a very good day for small business because, after today, the SBA will have an exceedingly capable, experienced, and accomplished small business champion in Dilawar Syed. So I will vote yes on his nomination, and I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to do the same.

LGBTQI+ COMMUNITIES

Finally, Mr. President, this morning, as the Nation celebrates Pride Month, the Biden administration has announced a series of new Federal actions to protect our LGBTQI+ communities from threats to their rights and their safety.

As over a dozen States escalate their attacks against these communities, the administration has responded. Today's announcement includes new community safety partnerships, initiatives to support the LGBTQI+ children and their mental health, and a dedicated response to the truly Orwellian trend of banning books across the country.

So I commend the Biden administration for taking these actions to protect the communities and affirming that all Americans deserve equal protection under the law and in this country.

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.

FARM BILL

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, as I outlined earlier this week, the Senate has a great deal of work to do to fulfill