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Senate

The Senate met at 3 p.m. and was called to order by the Honorable TAMMY DUCKWORTH, a Senator from the State of Illinois.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Almighty and everlasting God, whom the heavens of heavens cannot contain, illumine us by Your Grace that we may represent You.

May our Senators, today, show You their gratitude through humble service to this land we love. Lord, help them to do Your will by bringing deliverance to captives, guidance for the lost, and relief to the oppressed. Direct their steps, and give them the wisdom to focus on the things that truly matter. When bewildered by vicissitudes, may they look to You as the one constituent they must please.

Touch us all with Your unfailing love, particularly the many staffers and other unsung heroes and heroines who labor long hours in the back-ground for liberty.

We pray in Your merciful 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 legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, June 12, 2023.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable TAMMY DUCKWORTH, a Senator from the State of Illinois, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATTY MURRAY,
President pro tempore.

Ms. DUCKWORTH 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 and resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Elizabeth Allen, of New York, to be Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

UKRAINE

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, public reports indicate that the armed forces of Ukraine have begun their long-planned counteroffensive in earnest. Having blunted Putin's

unprovoked escalation last year, Ukraine is aiming to drive Russian forces back and out of occupied Ukrainian territory on multiple fronts.

Reaching this point in the conflict is, of course, due in large measure to the heroism of the brave Ukrainians defending their homeland, but their success is also—also—a credit to the tangible support of the United States, NATO allies, and friends around the globe who value the same sovereignty and territorial integrity which is under attack in Ukraine.

The acute threat of Russian aggression helped wake many of our European friends from a holiday from history. Putin's escalation drove many of our closest allies to start investing more seriously in their own defense and contribute more readily to collective security. This is, of course, a positive development and a critical one as we look toward deterring aggression from China.

At the same time, America's support for Ukraine has done much more than sustain their defense. As I have said repeatedly, sending lethal Western capabilities to the frontlines has been a direct investment in our own security in a number of concrete ways.

First, equipping our friends on the frontlines to defend themselves is a far, far cheaper way, in both dollars and American lives, to degrade Russia's ability to threaten the United States.

Second, Ukraine's effective defense of its territory is teaching us lessons about how to improve the defenses of partners who are threatened by China. It is no surprise that senior officials from Taiwan are so supportive of efforts to help Ukraine defeat Russia.

Third, most of the money that has been appropriated for Ukraine's security assistance doesn't actually go to Ukraine; it gets invested in American defense manufacturing. It funds new weapons and munitions for U.S. Armed Forces to replace the older materiel we have provided to Ukraine.

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



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So let me be clear: This assistance means more jobs for American workers and newer weapons for American servicemembers.

I know that media reports about U.S. assistance to Ukraine have been really quite confusing—so has the Biden administration's messaging. Last week, for example, the administration announced what it called a "new" package of security assistance to Ukraine.

In reality, this is the latest tranche of assistance. It is not a new appropriation. It is just the latest in a slow and steady disbursement—perhaps too slow and too steady—of assistance previously approved by an overwhelming bipartisan majority in Congress.

I will have more to say as Ukraine continues to push Vladimir Putin's forces backward, and Senate Republicans will continue our efforts to invest in America's own national security.

JUDICIAL NOMINATIONS

Madam President, now on an entirely different matter, last week, Senate Democrats backtracked on plans to confirm Dale Ho to the Southern District of New York. Apparently, our colleagues didn't yet have enough votes for the self-described "wide-eyed leftist" President Biden would like to give a lifetime appointment to the Federal bench.

I have talked about Mr. Ho's criticism of the Fraternal Order of Police and his history of attacking our colleagues on Twitter. I have discussed his apparent dismay that fidelity to the Constitution as it was written doesn't really produce "progressive" outcomes. But as you might expect, the rap sheet on a nominee too radical for Senate Democrats goes on. Mr. Ho has also vocally opposed laws that ban ballot harvesting. He has railed against common-sense voter ID requirements that 80 percent of Americans support.

Senate Democrats will have to think hard about whether they are ready to ram Mr. Ho's nomination through after all of this. But in the meantime, two more of President Biden's leftwing nominees are up for a vote this week; first, Hernan Vera, nominated to the bench in the Central District of California. Mr. Vera's nomination comes with the ringing endorsement of the left's dark money operation, and a review of his record certainly shows why.

Throughout his legal career, Mr. Vera has made no effort to hide his willingness to pick progressive activism over the rule of law. He has asserted publicly that the need for greater security at our southern border is actually a "myth" and supported efforts to prevent ICE from conducting enforcement operations in county jails. In other words, Mr. Vera doesn't just oppose enforcing immigration laws; he opposes enforcing laws illegal immigrants have broken after they have arrived.

The Senate will also vote this week on the nomination of Patrick Pitts to the Northern District of California. Mr.

Pitts helped to organize student protests against military recruiters on campus when he was at Yale, but he publicly fawned over a leftist judge who later faced a reckoning over his decades of sexual harassment. Apparently, the Army was unseemly, but a notorious harasser was "an inspiration."

Aside from being a bad judge of character, Mr. Pitts has spent his legal career making life easier for Democrats' Big Labor allies. He worked to give union bosses more political influence over American workers, especially those who would rather be free from union thuggery.

I will be opposing each of these nominations and will urge our colleagues to do the same.

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. DURBIN. Madam 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.

UKRAINE

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, last week, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, GEN Mark Milley, spoke at the Normandy American Cemetery and Memorial in France. In the audience were veterans—some were over 100 years old—who stormed those beaches 79 years ago on D-Day. D-Day was a critical moment in World War II. It was the beginning of the liberation of Europe, and it was the beginning of the end of Nazi tyranny.

Looking out over a sea of headstones of fallen American patriots, Secretary Austin said:

It's easy to forget how desperate the battle was . . . but, on D-Day, courage won out over terror, daring over cruelty, and liberty won out over tyranny.

Today, that same eternal battle is being fought in another place, in Ukraine, which has begun a heroic counteroffensive to finally drive out Vladimir Putin and the Russian invaders and to preserve democracy in that nation.

Next month, Senator SHAHEEN of New Hampshire and I will travel to the NATO summit in Lithuania. The location—in a nation that was once under Soviet occupation—is both historic and poignant. Success in Ukraine's counteroffensive and the country's long-term security will once again be on top of the NATO agenda. We also will welcome the security alliance's newest member, Finland. I hope, by the time we convene in Lithuania, Hungary and Turkey will have ratified Sweden's succession without any further delay—another plus for the future of the NATO alliance.

Let me also state clearly that I believe Ukraine's future is in the European Union and the NATO alliance, and

until the day that Ukraine can join NATO, the United States and other key allies must help Ukraine with security guarantees, as we do with other key non-NATO allies. It is clear that Ukraine can never trust Russia. It is in the interest of the United States and democracy itself that we ensure Ukraine can always defend itself, that any aggressor will think twice before ever again trying to threaten its people or its territory.

President Biden knows what is at stake in this fight against tyranny. So do our NATO allies. And I want to particularly note Minority Leader MCCONNELL. Echoing Ronald Reagan, Senator MCCONNELL has spoken forcefully about the need for continued bipartisan support for Ukraine. That is the ultimate strength of the American role in the NATO alliance: that we speak with one voice. And, of course, Ukrainian President Zelenskyy understands that what is at stake in Ukraine is bigger than just his nation; it is literally a battle for freedom and democracy themselves.

In his remarks at Normandy last week, Secretary Austin said:

Free soldiers will fight more bravely than the armies of tyrants.

He is correct, but the free people of Ukraine must not be left to fight this war alone. The United States and nations of the free world must provide the resources and equipment and training necessary for them to prevail against Putin and his cowardly enablers. The free people and soldiers of Ukraine are fighting today to preserve the peace and international order for which those young Americans gave their lives at D-Day. We must stand with them with resolve until Ukraine is free again.

INVESTING IN AMERICA

Madam President, on an issue that you know so well, let me say this: Last week, the White House launched a new website, invest.gov. It shows the historic investments that have been announced across America since President Biden took office.

We should not forget that under the previous President, there were 4 years of promises and 4 years where they failed to produce. Under President Biden, we have a bipartisan infrastructure bill that is changing the face of America and preparing our economy for the 21st century.

Invest.gov shows the historic investments that have been announced across America under President Biden and provides a State-by-State overview of those investments.

In a little more than 2 years, Illinois, our State, has received more than \$9 billion in infrastructure funding, more than \$1 billion to support the creation of clean energy jobs, and we are creating thousands of new manufacturing jobs at this very moment.

Today, I want to tell you about one particular project near and dear to us in Illinois. It is a project our leaders have been talking about for literally