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Senate

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.

Our Father in Heaven, continue to guide the steps of our Senators. Lift their gaze to the beckoning hills of Your help, leading them on paths that bring them to hope and away from despair.

Lord, as they journey toward justice and peace, make them satisfied to follow Your plans and fulfill Your purposes. Give them a positive attitude. As they face today's challenges, direct them to discern what is Your best for our Nation and world.

Lead kindly, light amid the encircling gloom. Guide us through the darkness of our own devices to the sure and certain destination of Your prevailing providence.

We pray in Your Holy 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, July 11, 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 session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Xochitl Torres Small, of New Mexico, to be Deputy Secretary of Agriculture.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, for Congress to work on artificial intelligence is to enter uncharted territory. AI is not like other issues Congress deals with. It is not like appropriations or healthcare or defense, where we have decades of experience to lean on; quite the contrary, from a legislative view, we are starting very close to step 1 when it comes to AI.

So today, the Senate is taking the next step in our effort to learn about

AI so we can be ready to act. Later this afternoon, we will hold the first-ever classified all-Senate briefing on national security implications of AI. It will be our second all-Senate briefing on this issue. Close to 70 Senators attended the last one, and I hope we will get similar attendance today.

We will be briefed by Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines, Deputy Secretary of Defense Kathleen Hicks, and other top experts in AI from our defense and our intelligence Agencies.

Today's classified briefing is crucial because, of all the issues AI would impact, national security may well be the most consequential. In the hands of autocrats or foreign adversaries or domestic rogue actors interested in political chaos or financial gain, the dangers of AI could be extreme.

But AI could also become one of our greatest tools for keeping Americans safe, for predicting and intercepting attacks on the homeland and for adding unprecedented sophistication to our cyber security and for protecting our elections. So we have a responsibility—a real responsibility—to educate ourselves on these matters.

Finally, these briefings are just part of the larger effort to learn more about AI and prepare the Senate to take action. Last month, I laid out my SAFE Innovation Framework for AI, a way for Congress to balance the urgent need to promote American innovation in AI, while making sure it is done in a safe and responsible way.

Last month, I also announced that this fall I will invite the top AI experts to come to Congress and convene a series of first-ever AI insight forums for a new and unique approach to developing legislation.

There is a lot we still don't know about AI. We need outside help if we want to ensure congressional action is effective, responsible, and promotes innovation in a safe way.

So these insight forums will bring the best of the best to Congress. Our

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



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jobs as legislators will be to listen and learn as much as we can so we can translate these ideas into action.

And we are getting a very positive response from those we are asking to participate in the forums, top people in the field and in areas like intellectual property, like facial recognition that we need to look for guardrails.

So the positive response we are getting means that we expect these inside forums to do just what they are intended to do: yield new insights on the issue. And today's briefing likewise represents an important step in our efforts to learn as much about AI as possible.

I look forward to today's briefing. I want to thank Senator ROUNDS, Senator HEINRICH, and Senator YOUNG for their help in making them possible.

WHITE NATIONALISM

Mr. President, now, on White nationalism, for the past few months, the senior Senator from Alabama has embarked on a one-man mission to excuse and even defend the meaning of White nationalism. He did it back in May when he bemoaned efforts in our military to root out dangerous White nationalism from our records:

I call them Americans.

Those were his words, his words.

A week later, he was asked to clarify his comments, and here is how he replied:

What is a White nationalist?

You would think he would learn, from the overwhelming negative reaction he has received from one end of the country to the other—that he would learn from that reaction and might maybe modify his comments, but no.

Last night, given another chance to clear the air, he suggested that, no, White nationalists aren't inherently racist; that, yes, White nationalism is American; and that the definition of "White nationalism" is a matter of opinion.

It is hard to believe that the Senator from Alabama has to be corrected again. The Senator from Alabama is wrong, wrong, wrong. The definition of "White nationalism" is not a matter of opinion. White nationalism—the ideology that one race is inherently superior to others; that people of color should be segregated, subjected, and relegated to second-class citizenship—is racist down to its rotten core.

And for the Senator from Alabama to obscure the racist nature of White nationalism, it is indeed very, very dangerous. His words have power and carry weight with the fringe of his constituency—just the fringe. But if the fringe listens to him excuse and defend White nationalism, he is fanning the flames of bigotry and intolerance.

Last week, the gunman who killed 23 people at an El Paso Walmart was sentenced to 90 life terms in prison. He was a self-described White nationalist. The man who murdered 10 people at Tops Supermarket in my home State of

New York, in Buffalo, was a White nationalist.

And if those examples aren't clear enough, let's not forget Charlottesville, where neofascists, alt-right radicals, and far-right militias paraded through the streets, carrying torches and chanting: "Jews will not replace us." Those were White nationalists.

This isn't a joke. This is deadly serious stuff. And for a Member of the U.S. Senate to speculate about what "White nationalism" means, as if it is some benign little thought experiment, is deeply and terribly disturbing.

I urge my Republican colleagues to impress upon the Senator from Alabama the destructive impact of his words and urge him to apologize.

BUSINESS BEFORE THE SENATE

Mr. President, now, on Senate business, today the Senate will continue working to confirm two district judges and two Executive nominations. Last night, I filed cloture on four additional nominations: another circuit court judge, another district judge, a Commissioner of the EEOC, and an EPA Assistant Administrator. This sets up a busy rest of the week here on the Senate floor.

And at the same time, the Senate will continue to move forward on the annual National Defense Authorization Act, known as the NDAA. Passing the NDAA is important for many reasons: to strengthen our defense and keep our country safe, to outcompete the Chinese Government, and to give our troops well-deserved pay raises.

The NDAA has routinely been a bipartisan effort, with both sides working in good faith, and that has been the case so far this year too.

I want to thank Chairman REED and Ranking Member WICKER for moving the NDAA through committee quickly on the bipartisan cooperation. As we turn to the NDAA, I am hopeful we can come together here in the Senate on legislation related to our ongoing competition with the Chinese Government, on artificial intelligence, and perhaps some other important issues.

I hope we can see that bipartisanship continues here on the floor and that we can pass the bill quickly without being dilatory. The House is having a whole lot of trouble moving on this must needed legislation, something I believe we can and should avoid in the Senate.

Finally, as Americans' faith in the Judiciary is at an alltime low, thanks to the MAGA-majority Supreme Court, Senate Democrats will continue to move forward on legislation to restore trust in our Court. Supreme Court Justices should not be accepting lavish gifts and vacations from billionaire MAGA extremists who bankroll hard-right causes and taint our judicial system by bringing those same cases before the same judges.

The highest Court in the land must be held to equally high ethical standards. I support the efforts of Chairman DURBIN and the Judiciary Committee to advance ethics reform in committee,

and I hope we can move on such legislation in this Chamber.

SWEDEN

Mr. President, finally, on Sweden, any fear that NATO is faltering—or that it has given up completely—was put to rest yesterday after the announcement that Mr. Erdogan dropped his objections to Sweden's bid to join NATO. And this morning, Hungary's Foreign Minister said that they, too, will support Sweden's bid.

This is terrific news for the alliance. Sweden's inclusion in NATO will strengthen the alliance and expand our united front against Putin's illegal and immoral aggression war in Ukraine.

Putin thought he could divide us. He believed he could bully us into disunity, but his hopes have backfired. And today the alliance remains united and stronger than ever.

I commend President Biden and his administration for supporting Sweden's accession to NATO, and I look forward to welcoming Sweden to the alliance as soon as possible.

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.

NATO

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, right now, President Biden and other NATO leaders are convening in Lithuania. The way I see it, there are four key objectives for this important summit: securing more Western support for Ukraine; improving NATO's own military capabilities; strengthening collective resolve against the primary threats posed by China, Russia, and terrorists; and welcoming Sweden to the alliance. I am encouraged by the progress NATO is making towards each of these objectives, but there is more work to be done.

As transatlantic leaders confer about how to help Ukraine defeat Russian aggression, it is significant they are doing so in a Baltic country—itsself once a "captive nation" subjected to decades-long Soviet occupation. The Baltics' proud history of resistance drives their active contributions to NATO and extensive contributions from their own arsenals to Ukraine's fight.

Decades after the fall of the Soviet Union, brutal Russian occupation has now found a new target, and the fate of Ukraine's resistance continues to depend on Western support. Western allies should use this week's summit to commit even more critical capabilities to tip the balance of forces in Ukraine's favor.