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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable MARGARET WOOD HASSAN, a Senator from the State of New Hampshire.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal Spirit, whose inward fellowship means cleansing, forgiveness, peace, and power, dissolve the barriers that keep our lawmakers from You. Take away the barrier of self-sufficiency that tempts them to live independent of Your will and way. Remove the obstacle of spiritual blindness that makes them unaware of invisible and eternal resources.

Lord, take our Senators over the hurdle of compromise that prompts them to deviate from integrity and to forget that You are the only constituent they must please. Give them the grace of receptive hearts and humble dependence on You.

We pray in Your sacred 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 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 MARGARET WOOD HASSAN, a Senator from the State of New Hampshire, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATTY MURRAY,
President pro tempore.

Ms. HASSAN 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.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

UKRAINE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, earlier this year, I had the opportunity to deliver an important message directed to our European allies in Munich. I told our friends that leading Republicans are as committed as ever to American leadership and a robust transatlantic alliance.

I emphasized our resolve for helping Ukraine to defeat Russian aggression, not because of some vague moral obligation but because of what it means for America's own core national interests.

Letting Putin's brutality succeed would mean putting some of America's closest trading partners one border closer to a violent and revanchist authoritarian regime. It would mean emboldening Putin's "friend without limits" President Xi in Beijing to as-

sert even more aggressive influence over on the other side of the world.

I spoke yesterday about how our allies recognized what is at stake in Ukraine and about how Europe's biggest economies have woken up from holidays from history and made serious commitments to helping Ukraine actually win.

For some perspective on this important progress, more than half of the Javelin anti-tank weapons Ukraine has received have come from countries other than the United States. In fact, we now rank 13th in terms of assistance as a percentage of GDP.

Even as America continues to provide critical assistance to Ukraine, some nations are digging even deeper into their own arsenals and making a much greater relative investment of support. Russian aggression has spurred our European allies to heightened vigilance and greater resolve. Here at home, the American people overwhelmingly share that resolve.

According to a recent survey, three in four Americans—three in four Americans—including big majorities in each party, think it is important to us, to the United States, that Ukraine win the war. A clear majority also supports sending U.S. military aid to Ukraine. And more generally, 85 percent of Americans say a strong U.S. military is essential to maintain peace and prosperity.

So the American people's view of our national security is really quite clear, but here in Washington, providing for the common defense remains our biggest and most pressing piece of unfinished business. President Biden's defense budget request is woefully inadequate, especially as we look at the growing military requirements to deter or defend against Chinese aggression.

Folks in Washington are using the threat of China to justify all sorts of other policies and initiatives, but the reality is, the primary area of geopolitical competition is part power.

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



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S2331

This growing threat makes our work on funding America's Armed Forces especially important, but the process of setting the Senate's national security priorities begins with a long-overdue annual Defense authorization.

I am hopeful that the Democratic leader is taking the necessary steps to bringing the NDAA to the Senate floor next week. I am hopeful this legislation will receive the thorough amendment process that it deserves.

The sooner we deliver on the NDAA, the sooner we can deliver the robust hard-power investments our Armed Forces need to replenish stocks, support our allies and partners, and deter growing threats to American security all around the world.

U.S. SUPREME COURT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, on another matter, last month, the Supreme Court included in its most consequential rulings of the term a major blow to the Biden administration's sprawling conception of executive branch power.

For years, the administration grasped for a way to deliver a big dose of catnip to Washington Democrats' wealthy blue-State base in the form of student loan socialism. They had dreamed up a reverse Robin Hood system of taking from working families to pay off the student loans of highly educated professionals, moving hundreds of billions of dollars in outstanding debt from high-earning doctors and lawyers onto the taxpayers' tab.

The median college graduate earns 55 percent more than the median worker who holds a high school diploma. And the wealthiest households in the country owe a disproportionate share of America's student debt.

But Democrats are hellbent on forgiving that debt at the expense of folks who carefully saved, paid off their debt, or avoided it altogether.

Of all the ways Washington Democrats have dreamed up to waste taxpayer dollars and betray the trust of working Americans, this one may well have taken the cake. But when the Biden administration picked an especially outlandish deal for enacting this particular scheme, the Supreme Court ended up being involved.

Just a couple of weeks ago, the Court ruled that 20-year-old emergency authorities designed during the War on Terror did not permit the President to ignore Congress and unilaterally cancel debt from his party's most reliable supporters.

As Chief Justice Roberts put it in the opinion of the Court, the administration's plan "‘modified’ the cited provisions” of existing authorities “only in the same sense that the French Revolution ‘modified’ the status of the French nobility.”

Washington Democrats tried to serve working families a raw deal. And by all accounts, they will probably try it again. But Senate Republicans con-

tinue to stand against radical student loan socialism—in whatever form it may take.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

MILITARY PROMOTIONS

Mr. SCHUMER. First, Madam President, I want to reiterate a point I made yesterday about Senator TUBERVILLE's military holds. The bottom line is very, very simple: Republican leaders and many of Senator TUBERVILLE's Republican colleagues oppose what Senator TUBERVILLE is doing because it puts at serious risk our military preparedness, our military security, our national security.

Very simply, the onus is on Republican Senators to prevail on Senator TUBERVILLE and get him to back off his reckless pursuit. That is the crux of the matter. It is on the backs of his Republican colleagues to get Senator TUBERVILLE to back off. It is hurting our military security. It is dangerous, unprecedented, and they have the power and the ability to stop him from doing it.

INFLATION

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, on inflation, let me begin with some welcome news for the American people. This morning, reports came out with new signs that inflation came down last month. The price of gas has come down over 25 percent since last year, and wages are now up also. Wage growth is significantly above inflation for the first time since the spring of 2021, right after President Biden took office. This news means one thing: more money in people's pockets, greater financial security, and affirmation that Democrats' agenda is working. We made a promise to lower costs, and today we have proof that we are making progress towards keeping that promise.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, on the AI briefing, yesterday, the Senate held its first-ever—its first-ever—classified briefing on the national security implications of artificial intelligence. It was an eye-opening presentation. Many of us spent a lot of time educating ourselves on AI, talking to experts, and holding hearings, but yesterday's briefing was a candid wake-up call on how truly complicated AI is and how much work, hard work, we have before us.

This will be an ongoing effort. We want to move quickly but not too quickly. We need to move quickly so bad countries—authoritarian countries

and bad actors, not countries themselves—don't get ahead of us, but we can't move too quickly because we have to get this right, and it is very complicated. Action on AI will not be a matter of weeks, nor of years but, rather, of months.

I want to thank my colleagues who attended yesterday's briefing. We had a terrific turnout of roughly 70 Members—even better than the first.

I want to thank the briefers by name: Dr. Arati Prabhakar, Director of the White House Office of Science and Tech; Avril Haines, Director of National Intelligence; Kath Hicks, Deputy Secretary of Defense; VADM Trey Whitworth, Director of the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency; and Dr. Craig Martell, Chief Digital and AI Officer at DOD. Each briefer was clear, concise, and informative.

I was gratified my Republican colleagues came out of the briefing and said: Yes, this was a real back-and-forth, not just people reading a piece of paper and not just people answering questions.

For sure, we are not done. Very soon, I will announce the timing for our third all-Senate briefing and again urge my colleagues to attend, especially those who couldn't make the first two briefings. Learning as much as we can about AI as quickly as possible is essential.

AI is unlike anything Congress has dealt with before. It moves and changes so quickly. It is going to affect our world so dramatically. It is so much deeper in its complexity and lies so far outside our expertise. Coming up with legislative solutions will be one of the most difficult things Congress has ever, ever faced, so these briefings are an important initial step.

I don't kid myself on how difficult this is going to be. Some people asked why did I decide to take this on. Well, just because an issue is difficult or unfamiliar to Congress is no excuse to turn away, especially when it is so important and is going to have such a huge effect on every American and every person in the world's life. We can't throw our hands in the air and hope someone else figures it out.

Of the many things yesterday's briefing made clear, one of them was that government must play a role in making sure AI works for society's benefit. The private sector has made stunning progress innovating on AI, and Congress needs to be careful not to curb or hinder that innovation. But we are going to need guardrails, and the only agent that can do that is government.

Yes, some companies may put guardrails on on their own, but when another company refuses to put on those guardrails, that company, the original company, will feel the pressure—political or, more importantly, economic—and say: Look, we can't have those guardrails either. Even if many developers have good intentions, there are always going to be rogue actors, unscrupulous companies, and foreign adversaries