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## House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Friday, September 8, 2023, at 1 p.m.

## Senate

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 2023

The Senate met at 10 a.m. 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.

Lord, this is the day that You have made, and we will rejoice and be glad in it. Thank You for the beauty of the Earth and for the glory of the skies. Thank You for the love which from our birth over and around us lies.

Be near today to our Senators. Infuse them with reverence for You. May this reverential awe manifest itself through their civility, humility, integrity, and faithfulness.

Lord, give them a respect and forbearance in all they think, say, and do, as they are energized by Your divine presence. Bless them and keep them and give them Your peace.

We pray in Your sovereign 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, September 6, 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.

### 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.

The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Philip Nathan

Jefferson, of North Carolina, to be Vice Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System for a term of four years.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

#### BUDGET

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, now, over the past few months, the Senate appropriations process has been a shining example of how things should work in Washington.

These are divided times, in a closely divided Chamber, but, nevertheless, we can summarize the Senate's work of funding the government down to one word, bipartisan—one word, bipartisan.

Thanks to the outstanding work of Appropriations Chair PATTY MURRAY and Vice Chair SUSAN COLLINS and many other colleagues from both sides, all 12 appropriations bills have been reported out of the committee with bipartisan support.

Some of them—many of them were with unanimous bipartisan support. That doesn't mean everyone agreed on everything. It means something more important. It means that disagreements haven't paralyzed the process.

This month, one of the Senate's top priorities will be to keep the government open beyond the September 30 deadline. Both parties in both Chambers will have to work together if we are to avoid a shutdown. So when the House returns next week, I implore—I implore—my Republican colleagues in the House to recognize that time is short to keep the government open and

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



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the only way to avoid a shutdown is through bipartisanship. House Republicans should follow the Senate's example and work with Democrats to pass strong, bipartisan appropriations bills. They will have their first chance to show their commitment to bipartisanship when they return next week.

The last thing Americans need right now is a pointless government shutdown. Our economy has come a very long way since the darkest days of the COVID pandemic. Inflation is slowing down, job growth remains strong, the investments we have made through the infrastructure law, the CHIPS and Science Act, and the Inflation Reduction Act are paying off with new projects and new good-paying jobs. We shouldn't squander all of that now.

A shutdown is unnecessary and would harm so many American families and businesses. But if both sides work in good faith, embrace bipartisanship as we have done in the Senate, and avoid all-or-nothing tactics, then there will be no shutdown, and that will be very good news for the American people because it is the American people who suffer most when there is a shutdown.

#### AI INSIGHT FORUMS

Mr. President, now on our AI insight forums, next week, the Senate will host a gathering unlike any we have seen before here in Washington when we kick off our inaugural AI Insight Forum on September 13—a gathering unlike any seen before to debate a topic unlike any other.

Our world is already changing in dramatic ways because of artificial intelligence, but we are likely just at the start. So to meet the challenge of this moment, our AI Insight Forums will convene some of America's leading voices in AI from different walks of life and many different viewpoints—executives and civil rights leaders, researchers, advocates, voices from labor and defense and business and the arts.

I am proud to say next week's AI Insight Forum—the first of a whole series we will host this fall—will be high-powered, diverse, but above all, balanced. That is precisely what Congress needs right now. Our committees have already done great bipartisan work on this topic, and ultimately they will be the ones tasked with drafting legislation. But these insight forums will supercharge the committee process by getting to the root of AI—where to start, what questions to ask, how to move forward. They will provide the nutrient agar to help committees do their work.

Let me stress something else. There is truly bipartisan interest to work on AI here in the Senate. I want to thank my colleagues, Senators ROUNDS, YOUNG, and HEINRICH, for working with me to organize these forums, as well as all my colleagues on both sides who recognize that we must move quickly on this issue.

Legislating AI is certainly not going to be easy. In fact, it will be one of the most difficult things we have ever un-

dertaken. But we cannot behave like ostriches sticking our heads in the sand when it comes to AI. Both parties must work together and treat AI with the same level of seriousness as national security, job creation, or civil liberties because very soon, if not already, AI will impact all these issues and more.

#### STUDENT DEBT RELIEF

Finally, on student debt relief, last month, President Biden announced his new SAVE plan for student loan borrowers, calling it the most affordable student loan repayment plan ever created, and not 1 day into this work period, Senate Republicans are already trying to torpedo this new lifeline for millions of American borrowers.

In the wake of the Supreme Court's horrendous decision earlier this year, President Biden has unrolled a student debt plan that already is helping millions. It is targeted relief for those who need it most—working-class families, middle-class families, borrowers of color. Remarkably, 4 million—4 million—borrowers have already enrolled. Those with undergraduate loans will pay no more than 5 percent of their income. Many borrowers with lower incomes will see their monthly student loan payments cut in half. Some will see it drop to zero, and many more will save up to \$1,000 a year on payments.

Think about what these savings will empower people to do—save for a downpayment on a home, start a family, create a business, contribute to the economy. Isn't that something we should all get behind? Well, apparently and unfortunately, Senate Republicans think not. On the very same day the administration announced that 4 million borrowers have enrolled in the SAVE plan, Senate Republicans announced their plan to eliminate this lifeline. It is becoming a trend—Democrats work hard to find new ways to provide relief for borrowers in need, and then Republicans, instead of working with us to find a fix to our broken student loan system, immediately shoot them down.

My colleagues on the other side like to talk about lowering costs, but then they turn around and oppose any attempt to give student loan borrowers the help they need, and for them, that is one of the biggest costs they have.

The Republicans use the same old tired excuse—that student loan relief only helps the few, the wealthy. That is utter nonsense. President Biden's SAVE plan will benefit the Americans who need it most—working and middle-class families, students of color, community college students, and borrowers working in public service.

Senate Democrats will strongly oppose this Republican measure should it come to the floor for a vote, and we will stand with student loan borrowers as we continue to push for as much relief as possible.

I yield the floor.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

#### UKRAINE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I would like to begin today by quoting a concise assessment of threats facing the United States and our interests.

A central continuity in history is the contest for power. . . . Three main sets of challengers—the revisionist powers of China and Russia, the rogue states of Iran and North Korea, and transnational threat organizations, particularly jihadist terrorist groups—are actively competing against the United States and our allies and partners. . . . China and Russia want to shape a world antithetical to U.S. values and interests. China seeks to displace the United States in the Indo-Pacific region, expand the reaches of its state-driven economic model, and reorder the region in its favor. Russia seeks to restore its great power status and establish spheres of influence near its borders.

That was the previous administration's national security strategy back in 2017. If anything, the threats it warned about at the end of its first year in office are even greater today.

Russia and China have both become more repressive at home and more aggressive abroad. Just before Russia's escalation of its war against Ukraine, our two most significant revisionist adversaries announced a "friendship without limits." In the past year and a half, Putin has aligned Russia even more openly with rogue regimes hostile to the United States, like Iran and North Korea. We must not ignore this contest for power.

Here is another passage from the 2017 strategy:

To prevail, we must integrate all elements of America's national power—political, economic, and military. Our allies and partners must also contribute [to] the capabilities, and demonstrate the will, to confront shared threats. Experience suggests that the willingness of rivals to abandon or forgo aggression depends on their perception of U.S. strength and the vitality of our alliances.

In my view, the lessons are clear.

Under the previous administration, we began to rebuild America's strength with defense budget increases. Under the current administration, that strength has been undermined by a disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan, desperate diplomacy towards Tehran, and a head-in-the-sand approach to North Korea.

Our enemies have been encouraged by meager defense budgets across NATO, including repeated budget requests by this administration that failed to even keep up with inflation.

Since Putin's escalation in Ukraine, President Biden has not been as decisive as many of us would have preferred, but this is no excuse for Congress to compound his administration's failures with failures of our own.

Now, with NATO unified and Europe awakened from its defense holiday and starting to spend real money on our collective defense, is certainly not the time to go wobbly. Now, with Ukraine bravely defending its sovereignty and