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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Friday, February 17, 2023, at 10 a.m.

Senate

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 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 Spirit, You are not only just and holy, but Your mercies endure forever. Because of Your goodness, we receive Your forgiveness and love. Forgive our past mistakes, and give us new hearts that we might serve You with passion.

Today, bless our Senators physically, mentally, and spiritually. Lord, strengthen them so that they will control their thoughts, words, and actions. Give them such providential guidance that all their own decisions will be made for Your glory.

We pray in Your mighty 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, February 16, 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 Lester Martinez-Lopez, of Florida, to be an Assistant Secretary of Defense.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

CHINA

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, so as the Senate closed business last night, we did something that I think would make the American people proud. The Senate spoke in one voice condemning the Chinese Communist Party for brazenly violating American sovereignty with their surveillance balloons earlier this month.

Our resolution—bipartisan—championed by Senators TESTER and COLLINS, sends a clear message that China's belligerence, their near-endless escalating tactics, and their scornful disregard for American sovereignty is unacceptable.

I want to thank Senator TESTER above all. He has been the leader in this whole country on this issue, and I appreciate Senator COLLINS working with him, and I appreciate both of their good work putting this resolution together with strong bipartisan unity.

This resolution condemning China is precisely the kind of bipartisanship Americans expect at a time like this. Instead of each party attacking each other, we are united in this resolution, in condemning China, exactly as we should be.

And last night's resolution is just one step. Senator TESTER is also taking the lead on a bipartisan effort to get to the bottom of why we didn't learn about these balloons sooner. It is a very important question that the American people deserve answers to,

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



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and I am fully, fully supportive of this effort.

Again, this is the kind of bipartisanship the country expects. When China is pushing the boundaries, they don't want Democrats and Republicans pointing fingers at each other. They don't want any premature attacks. They want us to come together to respond to the threats posed by the CCP, and that is just what we did last night.

Now, yesterday's resolution was not the only way the Senate was focused on standing firm against the CCP. We also, yesterday, had a briefing from the Department of Defense on our ongoing competition with China. I want to thank the briefing team for their hard and ongoing work. While all the details are classified, I want to make a few points.

First, the United States is competing with China at every level: economically, militarily, geopolitically, technologically, in terms of our fundamental values, and more. It won't be enough to outcompete China in any single area. We must be ready to compete with them on all of these fronts because that is what China is trying to do.

Second, China's main goal with respect to the United States is to displace us. Their main goal with respect to the United States is to displace us, displace NATO in Europe, and displace our allies as the world leaders on the military and geopolitical side and in driving the innovations of tomorrow, many of which affect our national security: AI, quantum computing, 5G and other advanced communications technologies, bio manufacturing, clean tech, and especially—especially—the next generation of semiconductors.

China wants to be ahead of us on everything because, if they do, they will be the ones writing the rules of the road on these technologies. An autocracy writing these rules, an autocracy that often uses these technologies to oppress its people and spy on them, that would have dangerous consequences for the world's democratic nations. A change in those rules with China in the lead would make the world a safe haven, unfortunately, for autocracy.

And, finally, the Chinese Communist Party is not constraining itself in pursuit of these goals. They are all in. They will do whatever it takes to beat us, and if we do not respond in kind, we won't be able to keep up.

So yesterday's briefing made a couple of things exceedingly clear for the Senate and, frankly, for the House. Most importantly, yesterday's briefing on our competition with China reaffirmed the need for Congress to work together and pass a clean debt limit without brinksmanship, without hostage-taking. Few things would hand the world over to the Chinese Communist Party more than a first-ever default by the United States. Defaulting would send a loud and clear message to the world that America cannot be trusted, that

squabbling democracies are incapable of governing, and that the best days of our country are squarely behind us. To prevent China from overtaking us, we must raise the debt ceiling on a bipartisan basis as soon as we can—no chaos, no brinksmanship, no default.

Yesterday's briefing also made clear that the kind of cuts that MAGA Republicans are pushing would be a disaster for staying ahead on China. China would love to see the kind of cuts that the MAGA wing of the Republican Party is pushing. It would guarantee that they would overtake us across the board—on defense and military preparedness; on innovation; on American manufacturing, science, and workforce; and so much more—so much more.

So let me say it again. China would love nothing more than to see the kinds of cuts across the board that MAGA Republicans are pushing.

The kind of cuts Republicans are talking about are dangerous. Instead, Congress must complete the appropriations process as we have in the last 2 years. China is all in on beating us. They are going to do whatever it takes. And as the Chinese Communist Party drives their country forward, the worst thing we can do is put America in reverse with funding levels from 2 years ago. It would be malpractice given what is at stake.

Now, we have done some good, important work to outcompete China in the last few years under this Democratically-led Senate: infrastructure, CHIPS and Science, the IRA, and last year's omnibus bill. But we shouldn't stop there. We need to ensure all of those bipartisan efforts are funded. We need to redouble our efforts. We need to keep pushing ahead.

There is no doubt that the United States and our allies and partners remain the world leaders militarily, economically, and in innovation.

But if that is to continue, the United States must be all in—all in—on outcompeting China and make it clear to President Xi that his autocratic campaign to dominate the 21st century will not—will not—succeed.

MEDICAID

Mr. President, now, on another important issue, I have a few, I think, very important things to talk about today, including the bill we passed last year and the briefing and its effect on what we should do in terms of debt ceiling and our budget. But here is another one: Medicaid.

Yesterday, I joined with a few of my colleagues to shine light on how radical out-of-touch MAGA Republicans in the House are. In the House budget, they are putting pen to paper on proposals that would devastate American families and slash the programs that millions of people rely on. These are not abstract issues. They would cause immense pain to countless Americans.

Republicans have been scrambling over the past few days to try to convince the American people that they won't touch Medicare or Social Secu-

rity, even though we literally have years' worth of statements and speeches showing that many of them believe just the opposite.

But another critical question remains unanswered and must be addressed. Are Republicans also going to target Medicaid? Medicaid is one of the most important programs in the country. One in four Americans rely on Medicaid to cover their healthcare needs.

Let me say that again. One in four Americans rely on Medicaid to cover healthcare needs.

It is not just low-income Americans that benefit from Medicaid—as important as helping them is, which, of course, it is—it is also middle-class families who have to pay, for instance, to put their parents in nursing homes. A couple in their mid forties, who have parents in nursing homes or assisted living, would have a huge burden placed upon them if Medicaid were slashed. These families work hard. Cutting Medicaid would put a huge economic burden on them as they struggle and work to stay in the middle class.

And Medicaid helps others too: people with disabilities, pregnant women, children, and so many more.

Let me say again: Medicaid is absolutely a middle-class issue in addition to helping low-income Americans. And we, on our side, want to help both.

Are Republicans going to strip away coverage for one in four Americans? We really don't know because Republicans won't show us their plan.

Americans are right to be worried about their Medicaid benefits because these MAGA proposals are coming right at them, at their expense. We must work to protect and strengthen programs like Medicaid, not put them on the chopping block.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. President, finally, ESG. Reports are out that Republicans will introduce a measure targeting a new rule from the Department of Labor that allows—repeat: allows; not requires—allows fiduciaries to consider the impacts of climate change and other ESG issues when making investment decisions.

Across the country, hard-right State legislatures are up in arms trying to stop State investment funds from working with money managers who dare commit the oh-so-heinous offense of looking at the big picture when making investments, including how climate change and other issues can present financial risks.

I just want to point out the obvious: Nothing in this DOL rule imposes any requirement on anyone.

Let me say that again. Nothing in the DOL rule that they seek to repeal imposes any requirement on anyone. In fact, it goes out of its way to make sure decision-making remains solely in the hands of the fiduciary.

Republicans love to talk about small government and letting the private sector do its work. But their obsession with eliminating ESG would do just