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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Tuesday, September 12, 2023, at 12 p.m.

Senate

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2023

The Senate met at 3 p.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.

O God, our help in ages past, our hope for the years to come, on this September 11, we pause to thank You for being a bulwark for our Nation. Throughout our national history, You have been our refuge and strength, our ever-present help in turbulent and tempestuous times. You were with us on September 11, 22 years ago. You are with us now. We remember the victims, the grief, and the courage. We also recall that even during the most challenging seasons, Your prevailing providence continues to sustain us. Today, may our lawmakers celebrate that You have been our help in all our yesterdays and our hope for all of our tomorrows.

We pray in Your magnificent 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, September 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 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 fol-

lowing nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Tanya J. Bradsher, of Virginia, to be Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the nomination.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

22ND ANNIVERSARY OF THE SEPTEMBER 11, 2001, ATTACKS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, there is one day of the year that for me will always embody what is most admirable and most enduring about the human spirit, and that day is today.

Twenty-two years after the towers fell in New York, after a plane crashed into the Pentagon, after United No. 93 came down in Pennsylvania, we pay our respects to those we lost on September 11. We mourn their loss—every last soul taken from us too early. We honor and thank every single American who became an unassuming hero in the aftermath of the attack: the first responders, the legions of volunteers and blood donors, the nameless many who did their part.

I will never forget so many scenes. One of them was a guy who owned a shoe store a few blocks north of the World Trade Center, who was just handing out shoes to everybody because many people had lost their shoes as they tried to escape from the towers. But there were so many different things.

Everywhere I go, I always wear this pin on my lapel as a reminder of 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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sacred promise to never forget. I called on Americans the day after to wear and display the flag. Just about everybody did as a sign of unity, of our coming together after an awful day. I wear it every day, and every time I look at this flag, I think about so many who were lost.

I was at Ground Zero this morning. I mean, you just hear the names that were read, those of every different background. They had people come up who had lost loved ones of every different background, of every different philosophy, race, creed, color, religion, origin, talking about the people they had lost.

I remember, when I went down the day after when President Bush sent a plane for then-Senator Clinton and me to come up, there were 1,000 people on line, holding up little signs—"Have you seen my brother, Bill?" "Have you seen my daughter, Mary?"—because when people were missing that first day, people had hoped and prayed that maybe they were still alive, but, of course, very few were.

So a lifetime can pass, but, to me, it always feels like yesterday. I look out my window, and I see the Freedom Tower—a symbol of resilience in New York—and I can see it from my window in Brooklyn, but I also think of the Twin Towers that were there and of so many who were lost.

I remember that day: the smell of the pile, human flesh; the noise from the chaos of the aftermath; the images of destruction that New Yorkers and Americans had never seen. I remember three friends of mine who perished—a guy I played basketball with in high school, a businessman who helped me on the way up, and a firefighter I went around New York City and did blood drives with. They are gone 22 years ago.

But most of all, that day stays with me because on that day and on the days that followed, I saw countless ordinary Americans do extraordinary things. Taxi drivers and store managers and businessmen and city workers and so many others dropped what they were doing and became heroes. They gave blood, organized prayer vigils, helped neighbors track down family members, and visited with loved ones and friends who had lost loved ones. I saw firefighters and policemen and union workers and rescue workers cast aside any concern for their own safety as they worked the pile. Many of them—far too many—became sick and even died because of their illnesses.

Our obligation to care for these first responders continues to this day. It is why I worked hard, along with Senator GILLIBRAND, to add \$450 million for the World Trade Center Health Program to the NDAA. It is why I fought and successfully added another \$1 billion for that program in last year's omnibus as well as the Fairness for 9/11 Families Act. And it is why, last summer, Congress enacted the largest expansion of veterans' health benefits in the PACT

Act, because we learned what these carcinogens could do to people whether it was over in Iraq or down in the pile in Lower New York—because the phrase "never forget" is not just about remembering what happened two decades ago; it is all about taking action today to honor and care for all of those who made ultimate sacrifices in the defense of our beautiful Nation.

So may God bless the memories of all of those who perished on 9/11. May God bless our first responders, our service-members, and their families. May God bless our great democracy, and may we keep it.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE INSIGHT FORUM

Mr. President, on the AI Insight Forum this Wednesday, I will join with Senators ROUNDS, YOUNG, and HEINRICH in hosting one of the most important meetings Congress has held in years as we welcome the top minds in AI for the Senate's first-ever AI Insight Forum.

Our inaugural forum will convene leaders from business, civil rights, defense, research, labor, the arts, and more—all for a candid debate about how Congress can tackle AI's opportunities and AI's challenges. These forums will provide the nutrient agar—the basis of knowledge and insight—essential for our committees to draft smart and effective legislation.

Wednesday's inaugural forum can be boiled down to three words: bipartisan, diverse, and above all, balanced. We will have AI advocates and critics, CEOs and unions, leading experts and researchers all together in one room, talking about where Congress should start, what questions to ask, and how to build a consensus for SAFE innovation. We will need every sector of the workforce, every side of the political spectrum, all part of the process if we are to succeed. I am proud that the participants for the first forum achieve that balance really well.

That is what any action on AI must be, balanced and bipartisan—balanced in a way that gives everyone a seat at the table and prioritizes both innovation, the kind of transformational innovation that AI can bring, whether it is curing disease or improving education or making businesses more efficient or protecting our security. But there is also innovation in keeping guardrails, the kind of essential innovation that is needed to prevent AI from going off track, and we might lose it all—and bipartisan because if AI becomes a partisan issue, it will paralyze any chance for progress. So I am glad that the Senate's interest in AI has been decidedly bipartisan.

As I said, these forums will be vital for helping our committees do the real legislative work of drafting AI policy. They will provide the nutrient agar to help the committees draft smart, effective legislation.

The good news is that many of the committees are already hard at work on this issue in a truly bipartisan way. I believe our hearing has increased the interest of committees to do work

here, but it has also made it clear that we cannot run away from this issue and put our heads in the sand like ostriches even though the issue is so difficult and changing and wide-reaching. I want to thank Senators ROUNDS, HEINRICH, and YOUNG, as well as committee chairs and ranking members, for their work thus far on AI.

Our subcommittees and committees have already held no fewer than nine hearings on AI this year on issues like national security, intellectual property, human rights, and more. This week, the Commerce Committee, the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, and the Judiciary Committee are scheduled to hold more hearings on AI transparency and oversight, which is just what our insight forums are intended to promote.

I am hopeful that our AI Insight Forums will supercharge the work already happening in the Senate by bringing outside voices to give their insights, their expertise, and their perspectives on how Congress can best proceed.

So, once again, I thank Senators ROUNDS, HEINRICH, and YOUNG for helping to organize this inaugural forum, and I encourage all Senators to attend our forum on Wednesday.

APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. President, finally, on approps, this week, the bipartisan appropriations process continues here in the Senate. Tomorrow, we will take the first procedural vote on a package of three appropriations bills: Military Construction-Veterans' Affairs, Agriculture, and Transportation-HUD.

Earlier this year, Democrats and Republicans reached an agreement on next year's spending levels as part of our work to avoid default, and these bills honor that agreement. Reaching bipartisan consensus on these bills certainly wasn't easy, and it took plenty of compromise, lots of negotiations, and an understanding that neither side would get everything it wanted. But each of these bills received unanimous support in committee—these three bills—from Republicans and Democrats.

So thanks to the leadership of Chair MURRAY, Vice Chair COLLINS, and appropriators from both sides for moving forward. This is what a functional legislative body looks like. Disagreements don't paralyze the process.

Now, as we process these appropriations bills through the floor, Congress must also avoid a pointless government shutdown later this month. I cannot stress enough that stumbling into a shutdown right now would not only be entirely unnecessary, it would cause immense harm to the American people. It could undermine so much of the progress we have made to lower costs, grow our economy, and restore the tens of millions of jobs lost during the worst days of COVID. It would also derail Congress from our work on so many important things, like lowering the