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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.

Almighty God, who has made of one blood all the nations of the world, make us one. Bring unity to our Congress, Nation, and world.

Lord, help us to see that awesome things can be accomplished when we stop worrying about who will get the credit. With this unity, infuse us also with hope, pragmatism, and courage.

Lord, give us realistic expectations about our future, reminding us that many problems that took decades to create will not be quickly solved. Motivate us to make the necessary sacrifices so that the rough places will be made smooth, the crooked places will be made straight, and the stars of hope will shine again in our hearts.

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 senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, October 19, 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.

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 MAJORITY LEADER

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

ISRAEL

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, yesterday, I joined with Senate colleagues for an all-Senators classified briefing on the Israel-Gaza conflict.

At the briefing, I asked Secretary Austin when he needs emergency funding for our ongoing efforts, and what he said was clear. He said: "We need it," and in very strong terms, he said the word "yesterday." The Israeli leaders we met over the weekend used the same exact word, "yesterday." That means the Senate cannot wait, and we

will not wait. We also talked about the situation on the ground in Israel and Gaza at our briefing.

As was made clear yesterday, the intelligence community assesses that according to the current analysis and available intelligence, Israel is not to blame for the explosion of the hospital in Gaza. As was made clear yesterday—and I checked this, and I was allowed to say it from our intelligence community—the intelligence community assesses that according to the current analysis and available intelligence, Israel is not to blame for the explosion of the hospital in Gaza. Our intelligence believes it was an errant rocket from terrorists aligned with Hamas in Gaza.

Spreading inaccuracies, as Hamas so often does at painful times like this, is supremely risky and only endangers more human life. There is a lot of misinformation circulating in the chaos of this war, and it is incumbent on all of us to ensure that we don't fan the flames and increase tensions, particularly when we are relying on a very, very difficult issue from a source that is known to lie all the time.

We all know, of course, the loss of any innocent life is terrible. The loss of innocent Israeli life, Palestinian life, any innocent life. I saw the pictures of the children in the hospital. I feel very badly about it. We have to condemn that at every turn.

But when seeking the truth, it is imperative—utterly imperative—that people don't merely take the first thing they hear and run with it, particularly when it comes from a group like Hamas, known to spread lie after lie after lie. We should not sprint to believe the word of organizations like Hamas, a terrorist group, while ignoring the facts and findings of our own intelligence.

That is why I was pleased President Biden made clear that our intelligence indicates terrorists in Gaza were responsible for this tragedy. I was also

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



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glad to see that the President in Tel Aviv yesterday was on point: America will stand with Israel. America will help them defeat Hamas.

But he also said everyone must be deliberate at this moment, and we must unequivocally work to protect civilian life during conflict. That is a really tough job, particularly when Hamas puts hostages in the middle of civilian populations, rockets, military equipment in the middle of civilian populations and uses them as shields.

But even having said how difficult this is, Israel, being a democracy, has to live to a higher standard. And we made that point—all of us—when we visited Israel, as much as we wanted the Israelis to know we stand by them and will give them the equipment that they need.

This morning, the Senate will pass a bipartisan resolution affirming that the Senate stands firmly with Israel and firmly against Hamas. Hopefully, the Senate will speak in one voice that Israel is our friend and that Hamas's attack is reprehensible and that we will stand with our friends to defend themselves.

Our resolution has overwhelming—nearly unanimous—support in the Senate on both sides. We are working with the few who have some problems to solve their problems so we can get this done.

By the end of the week, the President will send the Senate a supplemental request to provide Israel the military intelligence, diplomatic, and humanitarian aid it needs. When the Senate receives this request, we will spring into action and move it as soon as we can.

Secretary Austin was clear: They need these funds yesterday, especially right now as extremists have brought the House of Representatives to complete paralysis. The world needs to see a U.S. Senate united in action. Democrats and Republicans in this Chamber must send an unmistakable message that the work of legislating is not going to stop over here because of chaos in the other Chamber. And if we act with enough bipartisan strength, it is my hope that it could help the House snap out of its delirium and get back to the business of governing, not letting a small hard-right group simply tie the House in a knot because they are not getting their way. Every day counts immensely.

RUSSIA

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, now, on a detained journalist. Unfortunately, yesterday, authorities detained a journalist with dual U.S.-Russian citizenship on specious charges of failing to register as a foreign agent. Alsu Kurmasheva is now the second American journalist detained by Russia this year after Evan Gershkovich of the Wall Street Journal was arrested in March.

We unequivocally condemn Russia's unjustifiable detention of Alsu

Kurmasheva and of Evan Gershkovich, and we demand they be released immediately.

It is no secret that Russia has a long and disturbing history of unjustly detaining U.S. citizens, especially members of the free press. But let me be clear: Journalism is not a crime and should never be met with persecution, intimidation, and suppression.

America stands with Alsu Kurmasheva, Evan Gershkovich, and their families.

BUDGET

Mr. SCHUMER. Now on the minibus, over the course of this week, I have worked closely with Democratic and Republican appropriators to move forward on the bipartisan Senate appropriations process. We have made a lot of progress this week trying to reach an agreement on amendments. We are getting close to an agreement, but we are not there yet, so we will keep working today.

Here in the Senate, unlike the chaos of the House, most Members on both sides want to see bipartisanship because that is the only way things move forward in a divided government. And the Appropriations Committee, under the leadership of Chair MURRAY and Ranking Member COLLINS, have done a very good job passing out all the bills with overwhelming bipartisan majorities, many of them unanimously.

But there is one crucial point: When we came to agreement to move these bills, both sides committed to stopping poison pill amendments because that would risk ending the process. Sadly, a small group on the other side have tried adding poison pills, and we have been dealing with them over the last few weeks. I am optimistic that we will work through these poison pills and pass these bipartisan bills soon.

Democrats made a commitment to our Republican colleagues to pursue regular order as much as possible because we want to get these appropriations bills done. We have committed to having debates and votes on relevant, non-poison pill amendments. I think there are 39 or so lined up. But while we are getting close, the work is not done.

We are going to keep working today. If people want to know why it is moving slowly, it is because of Republican insistence on poison pill amendments. But that is not going to stop us. We are going to keep moving forward, and we are going to try to vote on amendments soon.

So, once again, thank you to the whole Appropriations Committee on both sides. I am optimistic we can get this done.

TRIBUTE TO BETTY K. KOED, SENATE HISTORIAN

Mr. SCHUMER. Finally on our wonderful Senate Historian. An old quote goes:

To study history means submitting yourself to chaos, but nevertheless retaining your faith in order and meaning.

That is a great quote, very relevant today in this Congress. I don't imagine that the author of that line was thinking about the U.S. Senate, but I cannot think of a more apt description of the duties of the Senate Historian.

For the last 8 years, the Senate has been blessed with the wonderful erudite Historian, Betty Koed—only the third Historian ever and the first woman to hold the position.

Sadly, this week marks the end of Betty's remarkable tenure in the Senate, which dates back to her earliest days as Assistant Historian in 1998. So she began in the Senate Historical Office the same year I began running for the Senate. I didn't know her at that point, but I am sure glad I have gotten to know her now.

It is a great undertaking to chronicle the history of an institution so unique, so rich with significant events, so influential in the landscape of our Nation. But for the last 25 years, Betty has done that with the utmost professionalism, devotion, and a bit of a flair.

Every week, she gives us a little history lesson at our Tuesday lunches, and every Member looks forward to hearing what she has come up with, and it is amazing. We learn a lot, and we enjoy it.

As Senate Historian, Betty was tasked with the extraordinary responsibility to preserve, protect, and promote the history of the Senate and the multitudes of Members who served in this Chamber. She has not only been a student of Senate history but a teacher of it as well. Thanks to her work developing education programs and exhibits, generations of Americans will have the means to learn about the Senate and the U.S. Capitol.

I was proud to lead a resolution with Leader MCCONNELL and all other 98 Senators commemorating Betty's decades of service and officially designating her—congratulations, Betty—as "Historian Emerita" of the United States Senate.

So on behalf of a grateful Senate, a grateful country, and a very grateful majority leader, I thank Betty for her service and wish her the best moving forward.

Congratulations, Historian Emerita.
I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

ISRAEL

Mr. MCCONNELL. There is evil in the world, and for the better part of the last century, America and our allies were squarely in the crosshairs. Unfortunately, we tend to forget that.

On September 12, 2001, George Will coined a phrase, saying that the free