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Senate

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.

Almighty God, by whose providence our forebears brought forth this Nation, give to our Senators a passion to protect those liberties for which so many have given their lives to defend.

Lord, give them also the wisdom to trust You with all their hearts and to passionately and humbly pursue Your purposes, knowing that You have promised to direct their steps.

Today, may each lawmaker experience the constancy of Your presence that will enable him or her to cleave to the sunnier side of his or her doubts. Guide our Senators with Your higher wisdom and bring them to the end of this day with their hearts at peace with You.

We pray in Your precious 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, November 8, 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, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Ramon Ernesto Reyes, Jr., of New York, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of New York.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

ELECTIONS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, another election night in America, another win for women's choice, another win for democracy, another win for the Democratic agenda of jobs, infrastruc-

ture, and lowering costs for the middle class.

Another terrible defeat for the MAGA agenda. Americans don't want hard-right extremists to govern this country. At stake last night was a woman's right to choose in Ohio, the Governorship in Kentucky, cannabis reform in Ohio, control of the legislature in Virginia, State Supreme Court seats, and so much more.

In almost every major election, Democratic candidates and Democratic issues prevailed. This continued and strengthened the trend of Democratic victories last year. There is no possible takeaway from last night other than this: Americans fiercely oppose MAGA extremism, fiercely oppose total abortion bans, and want bipartisan leaders who can put America's needs first.

After last night's results, I have a message to my Republican colleagues: When the MAGA agenda can't win in deep red Kentucky or in Ohio or help you in Virginia, it is time to recognize MAGA extremism is the wrong answer, not just for the country, but even for the GOP.

I hope Republicans in Congress see that after last night, extremism must be rejected and bipartisanship embraced. Time will tell if House Republicans choose the right path.

I want to say one more thing about the results in Ohio. With strong support, the people of Ohio have voted to legalize the recreational use of marijuana. Americans think it is long past time to enact cannabis reform. So here in the Senate, I will continue to work with colleagues on both sides and my good friend Senator BROWN to keep moving on bipartisan cannabis legislation as soon as we can.

Last night shows just how precious and vital and sacrosanct our system of elections is. It shows how much work we have to do to preserve democracy so that it can survive in the 21st century.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Today, Senators from both sides of the aisle will take the next step in

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



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keeping our elections secure—this time from the powerful changes wrought by artificial intelligence, AI.

This morning, I will join with colleagues from both sides and with experts from across the country for our AI Insight Forum on elections and democracy. It is one of the most important forums that we will hold this year, because of all the ways AI will shape our lives, and few are as immediate and stark as the impact it could have on elections.

This is the problem we now face: If left unchecked, AI has the potential to erode our democracy from within and from abroad.

Political ads have already been released this year using AI-generated images and text-to-voice converters to depict certain candidates in a negative light. Uncensored chatbots can already be deployed in a massive scale to target millions of individual voters for political persuasion. And, unfortunately, once damaging information is sent to 100 million homes, it is hard—and at times impossible—to put the genie back in the bottle.

If we don't enact the right guardrails soon, we could soon live in a world where political campaigns regularly deploy totally fabricated yet totally believable images and footage of Democratic or Republican candidates, distorting their statements and greatly harming their election chances.

Protecting our elections from AI's risks isn't just an issue for Democrats or just Republicans. Everyone—everyone—will be affected. Time is of the essence, as Americans prepare to go to the polls in 2024. So I encourage all my colleagues to come to this AI forum this morning.

GLOBAL ISSUES

Mr. President, now on global issues and challenges. The global community is facing a great number of challenges these days: Israel and Hamas are at war, with Iran itching to join the fray; Russian aggression in Ukraine challenges the stability of the Western alliance; the Chinese government threatens Taiwan's independence.

The United States is uniquely positioned and, I would argue, needed to play a role in ensuring the peaceful existence of the people of Israel, Gaza, Ukraine, and Taiwan. I believe that most Members of this body would agree with me. However, some Members on the other side of the aisle—not all—seem to prefer that the United States sit on the sidelines or, in other words, put their heads in the sand as we face these global battles.

Some Members on the other side of the aisle seem to prefer that Putin, Xi, and Hamas pursue their ambitions unthwarted.

I state right here and now that I do not agree with those Republican colleagues. I believe that the United States of America must make a stand against totalitarianism and terrorism. I would hope that everyone would agree with me. But here in the Senate,

it seems that some of my Republican colleagues are siding with Putin and placing unrealistic conditions on aid to Ukraine.

But we are not giving up. We are going to keep pushing, and we will succeed. Whether it is aid to Israel or aid to Ukraine or aid for Taiwan or humanitarian aid for the people of Gaza or keeping the government open or avoiding default, Republicans must shun doing the thing that some hard-right Republicans want them to do: take issues that, on their own, have strong bipartisan support and inject them with toxic provisions that make it impossible to get anything done. That is what happened last week with the House Israel bill. It is what is happening this week with a Senate GOP immigration proposal.

At a moment when the world is in crisis, when our friends abroad need our help, when our troops face increased attacks in Iraq and Syria, and with a government shutdown looming over us, this moment calls for bipartisanship. This moment calls for Republicans and Democrats to be realistic and clear-eyed about what we can pass through both Chambers on immigration, border, and all other issues.

Israel, Ukraine, civilians in Gaza, the Indo-Pacific, all of these things have bipartisan support in both Chambers. All of them deal with our national security. None of them should be turned into bargaining chips for hard-right policies. We must win on all of them.

Now, it has been over a month since Israel endured the deadliest terrorist attack in her entire history. There are still over 250 hostages held by Hamas, including American hostages and women and children. We promised to send Israel aid as soon as we could, and we will work hard—hopefully, in a bipartisan way—to get this done.

In the last 2 days, I have spoken with senior officials in the Israeli government—including President Isaac Herzog, Prime Minister Netanyahu, Defense Minister Gallant, Minister Gantz, and Opposition Leader Lapid—and reiterated that the United States has Israel's back in this dark hour. I made clear that 1 month after Hamas' attack, America's commitment to Israel and to the Israeli people is ironclad, and America will always be Israel's strongest ally. I assured them that I am doing everything to pass the President's assistance package ASAP.

In my conversations, I stressed to Israeli leaders that as Israel works to radically reduce the threat of Hamas, which they must do, they also have a responsibility to protect innocent Palestinian civilian life. We know this is not easy, but it must be done. We must likewise work together to send critical humanitarian aid to innocent civilians in Gaza who have nothing to do with Hamas.

I also strongly urged the Israeli government to quickly clamp down on settler violence against and displacement of Palestinian civilians in the West

Bank. Violence and displacement against these Palestinian civilians are not just wrong, it risks spreading the current crisis beyond Gaza at a time when Israel and America are working hard to deter other actors from taking advantage of the situation. In the long run, it also makes it much harder to achieve a two-state solution, which I support and which the vast majority of Americans support, and which Hamas does not.

We also talked about my meetings with the families of the hostages. I shared how I was moved by the stories of families of hostages held by Hamas whom I met in Israel and in the United States, and I discussed the need to locate and secure the release of all hostages held by Hamas through all means possible.

Finally, I encouraged Israeli leaders to do all they can to support the Senate's comprehensive package, including robust humanitarian assistance for Gaza, so that innocent civilians, who have nothing to do with Hamas, can get the food, water, and necessities they need.

At every point during my conversation with Israeli leaders, one idea remained constant: We will stand strong with Israel. We will support Israel's right to defend themselves, and we will work hard to pass emergency assistance for Israel and Ukraine and humanitarian assistance for Gaza and the Indo-Pacific as soon as we can.

JUDICIAL NOMINATIONS

Mr. President, finally, on judges, last night, the Senate reached a major milestone. We confirmed our 100th woman and our 150th judge overall to the Federal bench since Democrats took the majority. It is not only double the amount confirmed by President Trump in all his 4 years, it is significantly more women than any full term of any President.

We are going to hold more votes today. We will begin by confirming Ramon Reyes, Jr., as district judge for the Eastern District of New York, who will become only the second Hispanic man to sit on the Eastern District. We will also advance highly qualified judges and nominees—other ones—in the afternoon.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Republican leader is recognized.

SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, the challenges facing America and our allies today are not an a la carte menu of projects we can address at our leisure.