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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.

Eternal Lord God, source of our joys, answer us when we call to You. With Your mercy and grace, free us from the troubles that challenge us. We acknowledge that no problem is too difficult for You. Lord, we bring You our needs and challenges, asking You to do for us more than we can ask or imagine.

Give the Members of this body the patience to live courageously with life's trials, knowing that You are the author and finisher of their faith. Lord, use them this day to bring healing where there is pain, hope where there is despair, and peace where there is warfare. May our Senators serve You with pure exemplary lives and thereby give those whom they lead an ideal to follow.

We pray in Your righteous 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, December 5, 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 Loren L. AliKhan, of the District of Columbia, to be United States District Judge for the District of Columbia.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

UKRAINE

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, later today, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy will address Senators through a secured video at our classified briefing on

the war in Ukraine. This will be at least the third time President Zelenskyy has addressed Senators since the beginning of the war. The last time he spoke to us, his message was direct and unsparing: Without more aid from Congress, Ukraine does not have the means to defeat Vladimir Putin.

Without more aid from Congress, Ukraine may fall. Democracy in Europe will be in peril. And those who think Vladimir Putin will stop merely at Ukraine willfully ignore the clear and unmistakable warnings of history.

It is, therefore, urgent for the Senate to pass a security supplemental. Last night, I filed cloture on a motion to proceed to a vehicle the Senate can use as a supplemental package. We will have our first vote on this vehicle Wednesday in the afternoon. I urge my colleagues to think about what is at stake in this moment in history. I implore them to do what is necessary to protect America's security.

If we allow Vladimir Putin to march through Europe, if we abandon Ukraine in its hour of need, it will make the world a more hostile place for democracy and Western values. It will send a message to the world that America is not up to the task of protecting democracy and Western values in this century. It will be a gift to the Chinese Communist Party, to the regime in Iran, to adversaries around the world who want nothing more than to see our demise.

The Ukrainians are fighting valiantly. They haven't asked for American troops, with the concomitant casualties and pain that would cause. All they need is adequate weaponry. How can we turn them down? How can we turn them down?

There is only one right answer. We must do what America has always done through her history: defend democracy, stand up to autocratic thugs like Putin, and put our adversaries on notice that America's resolve will not falter.

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



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Now, the Senate's supplemental package remains on hold because our Republican colleagues have insisted that they need an immigration proposal to pass. While immigration is important, it is a separate issue from foreign aid to Ukraine and Israel and humanitarian aid to Gaza and the Indo-Pacific. It is a difficult issue we have debated and never come to a conclusion on for decades. It is extraneous to this debate.

Some of our Republican leaders say: Well, that is what the public wants.

Yes, the public wants border, but it is unrelated to Ukraine. Our Republican friends are saying they will defend democracy only at a price unacceptable to Democrats, and the price is forcing Congress to accept radical immigration policies that come straight from Donald Trump.

One Republican Senator said yesterday—listen to this. He said:

This is not a traditional negotiation, where we expect to come up with a bipartisan compromise on the border. This is a price that has to be paid in order to get the supplemental.

No compromise—why are we sitting down and talking if there is never going to be a compromise? What that Republican Senator said, Mr. President, is the textbook definition of hostage-taking.

I want to be clear. First, Democrats want to deal with the problems of immigration and the border. We have been trying for years. But—I also want to be clear—if Republicans had not brought up immigration, an important but separate and partisan issue that has been debated for decades, Ukraine funding would not be in danger right now.

This mess was created entirely by hard-right Republicans, and, alarmingly, Republican leadership has gotten behind them. And most of those hard-right Republicans who say we must have border don't want to vote for aid for Ukraine, in any case.

If funding for Ukraine fails, it will not be a bipartisan failure. It will be a failure solely caused by the Republican Party and the Republican leadership because it was a decision of that Republican leadership, pushed by the hard right, many of whom want Ukraine to fail, to make border a precondition to supporting Ukraine.

Let me say that again because the logic is perfectly clear and irrefutable. If funding for Ukraine fails, the failure will solely be on the Republican Party because it was the decision of the Republican leadership, pushed by the hard right, many of whom want Ukraine to fail, to make border a precondition to supporting Ukraine.

Now, even though we warned Republicans about the dangers of injecting partisan border issues which threaten to derail aid to Ukraine, we sat down at the negotiating table in good faith. We said from the get-go we would be willing to compromise. Everyone would like to come to a compromise on bor-

der—a bipartisan compromise, a real compromise, not one side demanding everything, as that one Republican Senator said.

For 3 weeks, Democrats have tried to be reasonable with our Republican colleagues to see if we can find some common ground on immigration. Some days, these negotiations look promising. We have been more than willing to show compromise. But, sadly, each time we try to meet Republicans at the middle, they have been moving the goalposts back, proposing nasty policies like indefinite detention for asylum seekers and sweeping powers to shut down our entire immigration system, which has been a hallmark of America for centuries.

After Speaker JOHNSON said last week that only policies along the lines of H.R. 2 can make it through the House, Republican negotiators here in the Senate gave up even pretending to show compromise. That is why the negotiations broke off Friday night. Republicans pulled the goalposts way back and proposed many items plucked directly from H.R. 2 or very similar to it—the same H.R. 2 that got not a single Democratic vote here in the Senate, the same H.R. 2 that couldn't even pass on the House floor, when it is attached to Ukraine, because it needs Democratic votes to pass it because 30 Republican Congressmen won't vote for any Ukraine aid. So despite Democrats' best efforts, negotiations have been going in circles.

Look, we want to find a way to solve immigration with our Republican colleagues. We know this is an important issue. We have many Members who represent border States and border communities. But if Republicans are holding up aid to Ukraine because they want us to work with them on border, the onus is on them to present to us a realistic, bipartisan proposal that can actually pass the Senate, with aid to Ukraine as well. And we need a bipartisan proposal that can get the broad support of Democrats, not just one or two while the rest of us are strongly in opposition.

Again, if Republicans want to bring up immigration right now, right in the middle of trying to pass aid to Ukraine and other issues, the onus is on them to present serious bipartisan proposals that can get broad support from Democrats, not just one or two Democrats. And if Republicans are unable to produce a broadly bipartisan immigration proposal, they should not block aid to Ukraine in response.

They should not be resorting to hostage-taking, as the Senator from Texas seems to be admitting. That would be madness—utter madness. It would be an insult to our Ukrainian friends, who are fighting for their lives against Russian autocracy, and it could go down as a major turning point where the West didn't live up to its responsibilities and things turned away from our democracies and our values and toward autocracy.

Ronald Reagan would be rolling in his grave—rolling in his grave—if he saw his own party let Vladimir Putin roll through Europe.

So, once again, I urge my Republican colleagues to think carefully about what is at stake with this week's vote. What we do now will reverberate across the world for years and decades to come, and history—history—will render harsh judgment on those who abandon democracy for Donald Trump's extreme immigration policies.

ASSAULT WEAPONS

Mr. President, now, on the assault weapons ban UC, tomorrow, I will come to the Senate floor with my Democratic colleagues to ask unanimous consent to pass the assault weapons ban.

If Republicans do not object to our unanimous consent request to pass the ban, the Senate can then pass a tried-and-true measure to reduce mass shootings and gun deaths in America.

When I led the fight for the assault weapons ban in 1994 in the House—along with our late colleague, Senator Feinstein, who led the charge in the Senate—it passed with bipartisan support because both sides recognized the need to rid our streets of these weapons of war.

After the ban went into effect, the numbers proved the obvious: Banning deadly assault weapons saves lives, plain and simple. The number of deaths from mass shootings and gun incidents both fell after the ban took effect.

Today, a decade after the expiration of the assault weapons ban, gun violence is running rampant in America. Families can no longer enjoy a night at the bowling alley or go out to dinner without fear of a gunman with an assault rifle. People can no longer stop by the bank in the morning or spend a Saturday at the shopping mall without that thought in their heads that maybe there is some gunman out there with an assault rifle.

That is why Democrats will come to the floor tomorrow to try and pass the Assault Weapons Ban and other gun safety legislation. And I hope my Republican colleagues find the courage to stand with us, stand with the American people, and stand with families and kids who are sick and tired of living under the threat of gun violence.

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.

NATIONAL SECURITY

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, the Senate has spent months considering