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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 PRESIDING OFFICER. Our guest Chaplain, the Reverend RADM Gregory Todd, Chief of Chaplains for the U.S. Navy, will offer the opening prayer.

The guest Chaplain offered the following prayer.

The Lord be with you.
Let us pray.

Eternal Father, ruler of wind and wave, You establish the heavens and order all of creation. Behold Your humble people, seeking only to serve and not to be served. Grant all who labor on behalf of the United States a heart of humble service.

Lord, in Your wisdom, You led the predecessor of this Congress, the Continental Congress of 1775, out of concern for the souls of sailors, to mandate that divine services be held on all Navy ships, thus giving rise 248 years ago to the Navy Chaplain Corps.

Inspired by the insight of our forebears, we seek Your divine hand to raise up more religious ministry professionals to serve as U.S. Navy chaplains. In our day, Lord, grant us an increase of Navy chaplains to care for the souls of sailors, marines, coastguardsmen, and their families as they navigate the daily challenges of military service.

We give You thanks for raising up righteous leaders who foster justice and promote the good. Grant Your wisdom to the newly confirmed and soon-to-be-confirmed flag and general officers, that they may bless Your people.

Grant Your favor to our Nation this holiday season; that though we are a people of many faiths or even no faith, we live united as a nation without hate or rancor. It is into Your divine hands we commit our prayer, trusting in Your divine mercy. 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 14, 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.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Virginia.

WELCOMING THE GUEST CHAPLAIN

Mr. KAINE. Mr. President, I rise to commemorate the special occasion of having our Navy chaplain, Rear Admiral Todd, appear to give the invocation, and I do so noticing a ministerial hat trick in our Presider and our Senate Chaplain and our Navy chaplain all being on the floor as we open the session on this wonderful Thursday.

The Navy Chaplain Corps was created on November 29, 1775, with an order by the Continental Congress that there would be divine services on the ships of the U.S. Navy, and that was 248 years ago.

And often in the Senate, around the anniversary of the establishment of the

Navy chaplaincy, the Navy chaplain is invited to come and open a Senate session. We are a little bit after November 29, but it is a very nice occasion to welcome Admiral Todd here.

Admiral Todd is a special individual. All chiefs of Navy chaplains are special, as we know from our own Senate Chaplain Reverend Black, but—get this—here is a little bit about Admiral Todd's career: He is a native of Seattle. He joined the Navy Reserves in 1986 and then was a reservist at the same time as he was pastoring churches. He superseded to Active Duty in 1994 and has been in the Navy chaplaincy business since then—a distinguished career.

But here is a mark that he holds that I am not sure anyone has or ever will hold. He has been the chief chaplain not only of the Navy but the 10th chaplain of the U.S. Coast Guard and the 20th chaplain of the U.S. Marine Corps before becoming the 28th chaplain of the U.S. Navy—truly a servant whose service has spread far and wide to incorporate not only those who are in our military but also our civilians—and especially their families.

So this is a special occasion and a good one that we should do annually to allow the Navy chaplain to open the Senate session in memory of this 248-year tradition. But in particular, I want to express my gratitude to Admiral Todd for the great service that he has provided to thousands and thousands of our sailors, of our marines, of our coasties, and their families.

I yield the floor.

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.

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



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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 Jerry Edwards, Jr., of Louisiana, to be United States District Judge for the Western District of Louisiana.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

BUSINESS BEFORE THE SENATE

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, today, negotiators from the White House, Senate Democrats, and Senate Republicans will continue negotiations on a national security supplemental package. Yesterday, we had another round of productive conversations, and there was more progress. But of course, there is more work to do, and we are going to keep at it and keep at it.

Last night, I filed cloture on a couple of nominations to the Federal bench and the Department of Justice, with possible votes on these nominees as soon as tomorrow.

To my Republican colleagues who have said action on the border is urgent: Let's keep working to find a solution instead of rushing for the exits. If Republicans are serious about getting something done, they should not be so eager to go home. This may be our last best chance to get this legislation done.

After weeks of deadlock, we have seen significant progress over the past few days, and we should take advantage of the opportunity because we may not get one for quite a while. It is not easy to reach an agreement on something this complicated. But so much hangs on our success, so we need to try with everything we have.

The world is watching what Congress does right now. Our friends are watching. Our adversaries are watching even more closely. And most of all, Vladimir Putin is watching closely. He is eager to see us abandon Ukraine and thinks he is getting that done, working, in part, through Donald Trump.

Here is what Putin said a few hours ago about American aid to the Ukraine:

[T]he free stuff is going to run out someday, and it seems it already is.

That, Mr. President, is Vladimir Putin taunting the Senate, taunting America. While Congress is mired in gridlock, Putin is on the other side of the world mocking our resolve.

In generations past, this would have been a no-brainer. Democrats and Republicans would have bent Heaven and Earth to stand up to Russian dictators. We spent half a century, spent billions and billions and billions of dollars, lost

lives to safeguard the free world against the malicious spread of communism, against tyranny, and against those who undermine our values. Now we find ourselves at another moment in history when democracy is under siege.

We heard directly from President Zelenskyy 2 days ago about what is at stake if we fail. So fail we must not. There is too much on the line for Ukraine, for America, for Western democracy to throw in the towel right now. We must keep talking. We must keep working.

Our Republican friends must be reasonable. They must show they are serious about getting something done, and we have had serious discussions in the last few days. Democrats are willing to keep trying. I urge my Republican colleagues to do just the same.

SENATE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Mr. President, now, on NDAA, last night, for the 62nd year running, the Senate passed our annual Defense Authorization Act with a strong bipartisan vote, 87 to 13. The Senate's bipartisan package of the Defense bill stands in glaring contrast with the partisan race to the bottom we are seeing in the House.

Just look at the difference between these two bodies. While the Senate is strengthening America's national security, House Republicans are wasting time on a clown-car impeachment inquiry that will get nowhere. The House Republican impeachment inquiry is the definition of "unserious."

The House should be looking at the Senate right now for an example of how both sides can work together in a meaningful way to pass serious legislation to improve the lives of the American people.

Now, as I have said repeatedly, we began the month of December with three major goals here in the Senate before the end of the year. First, we had to end the blockade of hundreds of military nominees. We have done that. Second, we needed to pass the NDAA. We did that last night. And finally and, of course, hardest of all, we must reach an agreement on a national security supplemental.

Democrats are still trying to reach an agreement. We have had productive talks with Republicans today, but of course we have a lot of work left to do. We are going to keep working. This is too important not to.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

NATIONAL SECURITY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, it has been nearly 8 weeks since President Biden submitted his supplemental funding request and identified four key national security priorities. For 8 weeks, Senate Republicans have been working hard to produce legislation that takes appropriate action on all

four fronts: helping Ukraine defeat Putin in Europe, helping Israel fight Iranian terror in the Middle East, helping Asian partners deter Chinese aggression, and helping the men and women of Border Patrol get the crisis at our southern border under control.

At the same time, we have had to spend several weeks now trying to convince some of our Democratic colleagues not to tank the entire effort just because they wish a Democratic President had not put border security in his request.

A number of Senate Republicans have been working in good faith to make sure that supplemental legislation makes substantive policy changes at the border, instead of just throwing money at the problem.

Meanwhile, we have had to explain to Members of President Biden's own party why the border security issue he included in his proposal was not extraneous to America's national security.

So here we are. Some very important conversations are ongoing. And here is the bottom line: The Senate cannot claim to address major national security challenges without a solution to the one we are facing on the southern border. We can't pretend to be serious about threats facing America and our allies without fixing the broken system that lets 10,000 illegal aliens cross our border in a single day.

I am serious. Senate Republicans are serious, and I hope our colleagues are as well.

ANTI-SEMITISM

Mr. President, on another matter, the events of the past 2 months have underscored that something is rotten in the state of America's most elite universities, and there aren't many more glaring examples than Harvard.

Last week, of course, Harvard's president refused to say whether calls for Jewish genocide would constitute harassment on her campus. Two months ago, in the immediate aftermath of the October 7 terrorist attack, she declined to condemn the Harvard student groups who openly declared that the murder of innocent Jews that day was Israel's own fault.

Under her leadership, radical "Students for Justice in Palestine" have organized to spin terrorist propaganda and mostly succeeded in getting Harvard graduates blackballed by major corporations and Federal judges.

One Jewish student at Harvard Business School was even assaulted on his way to study.

And yet despite her abysmal record on combating anti-Semitism and mounting allegations of plagiarism in her own scholarship, the cadre of left-wing financiers and university administrators who make up the governing Harvard Corporation has affirmed their "confidence that President Gay is the right leader to help our community heal."

Well, when you look at Harvard's history, this embarrassing lack of moral clarity is hardly a surprise. A century