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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Friday, December 22, 2023, at 9 a.m.

Senate

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2023

The Senate met at 12:03 p.m. and was called to order by the Honorable JOHN W. HICKENLOOPER, a Senator from the State of Colorado.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Sovereign God, You see everything that happens in our Nation and world, as You lead us by Your mercies and grace. Continue to shower our planet with Your blessings, protecting us from the forces that hinder freedom.

In this season of cheer, inspire our lawmakers with wisdom to express their gratitude for the gifts You have given this great Nation. May this gratitude also be expressed by their reverence for You and their willingness to obey Your precepts. Help them to keep their promises to You and to one another, no matter how great the challenges may be. Lord, enable them to walk securely in the path of Your will.

We pray in the Name of the Prince of Peace. 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 20, 2023.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable JOHN W. HICKENLOOPER, a Senator from the State of Colorado, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATTY MURRAY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. HICKENLOOPER 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 for debate only, 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.

MILITARY NOMINATIONS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, yesterday, 10 months of delay finally ends on a positive note. The Senate confirmed the last of the military nominees held up by Senator TUBERVILLE. Military leaders and their families who have had their lives put on hold for months can finally breathe a sigh of relief because the wait is over.

It was a very good outcome, one that should not have been necessary. But now that the holds have been lifted and these nominees confirmed, I hope this never happens again. Let the experience of the past 10 months be a warning: No Senator—no Senator—should use our military officers and their families as political pawns to push a political agenda no matter how strongly they believe in that agenda.

This was a long and painful ordeal for our Armed Forces, but it ended on a positive note for them and for our country because Senator TUBERVILLE didn't get one bit of what he asked for, only a lot of pain to military families.

Let's make sure this never happens again no matter how strongly any 1 of the 100 Senators feels on any one issue. Don't hold the military families hostage.

SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, there will be no more rollcall votes this year. But make no mistake, the winter recess will be a busy and important few weeks for the U.S. Senate. Negotiations will continue around the clock, reaching an agreement on a critical national security supplemental.

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



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As I speak right now, the negotiators are in a room down the hall trying to make more progress. I came by a few minutes ago to thank all of them for their hard work and encourage them to continue. The future not only of Ukraine but of our country and the Western World depends on it. Challenging issues remain, but we in this caucus are committed to addressing needs at the southern border and to helping our partners and allies confront and deter serious threats in Israel, Ukraine, and the Indo-Pacific. The Senate will not let these national security challenges go unanswered.

When we return in the new year, we hope to take swift action on the national security supplemental. Passing a national security supplemental is not going to be easy. It is one of the hardest things this Senate has undertaken in a very long time. It will take compromise, good faith, and recognition from both sides that nobody is going to get everything they want.

Democrats will continue to work in good faith with our Republican counterparts to get things done. We will not abandon our principles on border, but we will work to find common ground wherever we can. Let me be clear: It will take cooperation from serious-minded Republicans to get this done. Again, it will take cooperation from serious-minded Republicans to pass a national security supplemental.

I know there are some on the other side who will never vote for it, but there are many who understand the need to both give Ukraine and Israel humanitarian aid for the civilians in Gaza and the Indo-Pacific the help it needs and to help fix our border—doing it in ways that are consistent with our principles.

Democrats will continue to take these negotiations seriously, and we urge the majority of Republicans on the Senate side who understand that this is real and very important to join with us in helping get this done. Doing it together, Leader MCCONNELL and I issued a statement last night that showed we both hope to get this done.

If we fail in this moment, if the United States abandons our friends in Ukraine to Vladimir Putin, history will cast a shameful and permanent shadow upon all of us. It is a matter of the highest urgency that we get this right, and that is precisely what we will work toward in the new year as soon as we return.

SENATE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, the first year of the 118th Congress has come to a close. It is time to look ahead to the many challenges we face in the year ahead. But never in recent memory has the contrast between the two parties been more obvious than in the past 3 years.

Under Democratic majority leaders, we saw the most productive Congress in modern history, but under a Repub-

lican House majority this year, we saw a year marked by chaos, extremism, and paralysis. There is no question that divided government and MAGA extremism made legislating in 2023 very difficult. For much of the year, it was as if Donald Trump himself were running the show over in the House, making it exceedingly hard to get anything done.

But in a difficult year, Democrats did not abandon our promise to work to make life better for the American people. This year, Democrats protected the historic wins we have gotten done in the 117th Congress: climate change, prescription drug reform, CHIPS and Science, and so much more.

And I would remind the country that all but one of these major bills we passed and led in the Senate was done with bipartisan support. You need bipartisanship to get so much done, but we protected those historic wins.

Second, we worked all year to implement those wins effectively: new infrastructure projects, new factories, new good-paying jobs. Across the country, manufacturing and job creation is surging; communities long overlooked are getting a second chance; seniors will be paying less for healthcare and prescription drugs; rural people will be able to get broadband—internet service—for the first time. After years of high costs, inflation has dramatically slowed down in the year since we passed the Inflation Reduction Act. We have protected; we have implemented; and the third word is “prevented.”

Even with the MAGA Republican rightwing majority running so much of the House, we prevented the worst things from happening. We prevented the country from defaulting, which would have been a disaster. We prevented, in both September and November, the government from shutting down. In each case, the keyword was “bipartisanship.” We can’t do any of these things without both parties cooperating. I urge Speaker JOHNSON to understand that as we approach the January 19 deadline. Without bipartisanship, we will not get anything done, and embracing the hard-right philosophy is a path to nowhere for not only the Republican Party but for the House and the country.

Finally, in a difficult year, Democrats persevered. We protected, we implemented, we prevented, and we persevered. We persevered at every turn to work, to get things done. We began our critical work on artificial intelligence. We pushed to outcompete the Chinese Government even as we added more historic and diverse judges to the Federal bench.

This work will continue next year. There will be no easing into 2024; we will hit the ground running. There is a lot we must do. We must not only pass the supplemental and finish the job of properly funding our Federal Government, but we have made large progress in a bipartisan way on new parts of our agenda: insulin reform, getting every-

body to pay no more than \$35 a month; artificial intelligence, where the bipartisan Gang of 4 held some very, very elucidating insight forums, and now we are ready to start looking at legislation; outcompeting the Chinese Government; passing SAFE Banking and cannabis reform; getting something done on railway safety, on online child privacy, and so much more.

In each of these, we have laid some groundwork with bipartisan support. It won’t be easy, but we want to get these things done in 2024. The only way, though, we will get them done—just like with the supplemental, just like with the government shutdown—is through bipartisan cooperation. It was the very first thing I said at the beginning of this Congress. Bipartisanship is essential in divided government. We saw that play out all year long. Only through bipartisanship were we able to avoid a catastrophic default, avoid a shutdown, and make any progress on appropriations or anything of import.

We also saw what happens when one party—particularly in the House; not so much in the Senate—refuses to embrace bipartisanship. The unproductive and dysfunctional House majority is the most unproductive and dysfunctional in modern history. What happened in the House because of that dysfunctional majority can be boiled down to three words: chaos, extremism, paralysis.

Donald Trump may not be in office, but his influence drove practically every major decision for the House Republicans, at great cost to our country. We saw MAGA extremists take the debt ceiling hostage to push an agenda that would have crashed the economy, raised costs, and killed millions of jobs. We saw MAGA extremists hijack the appropriations process by adding poison pills, restricting a woman’s right to choose, and so much else. We even saw MAGA extremists bring all of Congress to a grinding halt for more than a month by expelling their own Speaker even as crises raged in Europe and Middle East—shameful.

Unfortunately, the dark cloud of Donald Trump hovers, looms over Senate and House Republicans, and it is something I hope they will resist because he is no good for the country, no good for their party.

MAGA Republicans are incapable of governing, plain and simple. Americans will not forget that when they head to the polls next year.

In conclusion, as we look to a new year, I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to work together. I urge my colleagues on the other side of the aisle to resist MAGA extremism that led their side to so much catastrophe. I urge Speaker JOHNSON not to let the 30 or so hard-right extremists keep running the show in the House, as they did for too much of this year.

It is not going to get any easier. The challenges we face remain great. But it is my hope—my earnest and fervent hope because I love this country; I love