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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.

O Lord, our God, wonderful in glory, who keeps Your promises to those who serve You, consecrate with Your presence the path You desire our law-makers to take.

Lord, kindle in the hearts of our Senators the true love of peace, and guide them with Your wisdom. May the faith they confess with their lips put such courage and hope in their hearts that they may live each day in the spirit of Your love. Cleanse them from every thought displeasing to Your goodness; that with pure hearts, clear minds, and calm hope, they may honor You.

And, Lord, have mercy upon our war-torn world.

We pray in Your powerful 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, February 29, 2024.

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 Marjorie A. Rollinson, of Virginia, to be Chief Counsel for the Internal Revenue Service and an Assistant General Counsel in the Department of the Treasury.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, yesterday, congressional leaders announced that we have come to an agreement to avoid a shutdown this weekend. So we can finish our work to fund the Federal Government for the rest of the year.

The House is set to vote today on extension of government funding until March 8 and March 22.

Once the House acts, I hope the Senate can pass the short-term CR as soon as tonight, but that will require all of us working together. There is certainly no reason this should take a very long time. So let's cooperate and get it done quickly.

I am very glad we got this done before Friday's deadline. I worked very hard with Chair MURRAY, Vice Chair COLLINS, and all the appropriators to reach this agreement. It is consistent with the top-line agreement I reached with the Speaker back in January, without the unacceptable poison pill riders that we said would not fly.

As I said directly to the Speaker over and over and over again, the only way to get things done here is with bipartisanship, and this agreement is another proof point.

This agreement is proof that when the four leaders work together, when bipartisanship is prioritized, when getting things done for the American people takes a high priority, good things can happen even in divided government. And I hope this sets the stage for Congress to finish the appropriations process in a bipartisan way very soon.

On top of all that, I am very glad the American people won't have to deal with the pain of a government shutdown. Even a partial shutdown would have threatened services for moms and children, would have hurt our veterans, would have hurt farmers, home buyers, law enforcement, and so much more. Thankfully, we are on track to avoiding all of that.

If there is anything that this appropriations process has made abundantly clear, it is this: When serious-minded Democrats and serious-minded Republicans engage each other with a desire to get things done, good things happen even in divided government. We avoid shutdowns. We invest in the American people. And we make our country stronger.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. President, now on the border, today, President Biden will visit the

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



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U.S. border at Brownsville, TX, where he will meet with local leaders and border enforcement agents. Three hundred miles up the Rio Grande, Donald Trump is expected to visit the border at Eagle Pass, TX.

When President Biden and Donald Trump visit the border today, Americans will see a glaring contrast between the sitting President who negotiated the strongest border bill we have seen in years and a former President exploiting the border for political gain and making sure nothing gets done.

President Biden knows the border is a serious problem. So look at what he has done: He sat down with Republicans to draft the strongest, most comprehensive border security bill America has seen in decades. And we worked with him here in the Senate to make that happen.

Let me say that again: President Biden knows the border is a serious problem, and that is why he sat down with Republicans to draft the strongest, most comprehensive border bill America has seen in decades.

But what did Donald Trump do? Donald Trump deliberately sabotaged the very same border reforms he spent years calling for because he wants to exploit the border for the campaign trail. He explicitly took credit for the bill going down. "Please, blame it on me"—those were his words.

It was Donald Trump who sabotaged the bill with dramatic updates to asylum. It was Donald Trump who sabotaged a bill that reformed parole authority. It was Donald Trump who sabotaged the bill that provided new resources to Border Patrol agents. And it was Donald Trump who sabotaged the bill endorsed by the Border Patrol union, the Wall Street Journal editorial page, and the Chamber of Commerce—hardly liberal groups.

So when Donald Trump goes in front of the cameras to lament the mess at the border, he should look in the mirror—he should look in the mirror—because he is the one who tanked the best chance we have seen in ages to fix it. Until Donald Trump said "oppose it," it would have passed here in the Senate and even in the House. And when Republicans in Congress say they will shut the government down or bring this legislative process to a halt unless we fund the border, that is bull, because they are the ones who blocked the deal.

Republicans are the ones exacerbating the border by pushing things like H.R. 2, which not only did not get a single Democratic vote, it wouldn't even solve the problem—it wouldn't even solve the problem.

And, again, as I have reminded Speaker JOHNSON over and over again, he can't do anything without bipartisanship when we have divided government. So to simply write what you want and put it for a vote when it gets no Democratic votes is a path to not solving the problem but, in a sense, doing the same thing Donald Trump

did: use it for political purposes, say the problem isn't solved for political purposes when you are the ones who prevented the problem from being solved.

Republicans cannot—cannot—claim to be serious about fixing the border while voting against the very same border policies they have spent years calling for. Republicans can't be serious about fixing the border when they say it is an emergency, and then when they have a chance to stop it, they refuse for crass political purposes.

That is what happened in the last few weeks, and Democrats will make sure the American people know it.

UKRAINE

Mr. President, now, on Ukraine, in the meeting with President Biden and congressional leaders earlier this week, I relayed what President Zelenskyy told me when I visited Ukraine: If Ukraine gets the aid they need, they will win the war. If they don't get those armaments, they will almost certainly lose.

Russia's recent advancements haven't been because of a lack of a Ukrainian plan or lack of a will to fight or a lack of courage or strength or dedication on behalf of the Ukrainian President and the Ukrainian people. I can assure you that after meeting with President Zelenskyy and the Ukrainian people, their resolve to win the war is stronger than ever. Russia's advancements have come simply because the Ukrainians are running out of ammunition.

If we don't provide this aid ASAP, not only will Ukraine lose the war but the United States will lose out to the Putins, the Xis, and the other autocratic heads of state. We will lose out. The American people will lose out over the next decades economically, militarily, diplomatically, and politically.

So I say to Speaker JOHNSON, this is a true turning point for America—for our strength, for our credibility on the world stage, for our national security. Speaker JOHNSON, please don't shrink from this moment. Let the supplemental bill, which passed with 70 votes here in the Senate, move forward. History—history—is watching you.

(The remarks of Mr. SCHUMER pertaining to the introduction of S. 4 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

REMEMBERING JIM KETCHUM

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, finally, to the Senate Curator, last week, I was saddened to hear about the passing of the first permanent Senate Curator, Jim Ketchum.

Very few in the history of the U.S. Senate have been tasked with the immense responsibility of preserving the history of this storied institution. Jim was one of them, and the very best.

A proud son of New York, Jim's career took him on a tour through some of America's greatest national landmarks, including the Arlington National Cemetery, the White House, and, of course, the U.S. Capitol.

At the White House, Jim served as Curator for not one, not two, but three administrations: Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon. When President Kennedy first appointed him at the ripe age of 24, he was concerned he was "too young" to hold the post, to which Jackie Kennedy responded: "That's what they told Jack." So Jim was truly special, and everyone saw it.

Here in the Senate, Jim led a long list of initiatives to preserve the Capitol Building, not just as a museum of American history but as a bustling beacon of democracy.

It is thanks to Jim that the Old Senate and Supreme Court Chambers were restored and now welcome millions of visitors every year. It is thanks to Jim that countless paintings, artifacts, and pieces of furniture documenting our history were recovered and preserved. And it is thanks to Jim that we all have a better understanding today of this building, this institution, and our place in history.

So Jim will be deeply missed. But I think it is safe to say that Jim will live on in this institution he worked so doggedly to preserve.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. 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.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, as I said earlier this week, government shutdowns never produce positive outcomes. That is why Congress is going to avoid one this week. Leaders in both parties and both Houses have agreed to a plan that would keep the lights on while appropriators complete their work and put annual appropriations bills on a glide path to becoming law.

I appreciate our colleagues' commitment to see this process through and make good on this essential governing responsibility, and I expect the Senate to act swiftly on a first step this week.

NATIONAL SECURITY

Mr. President, on another matter, the serious challenges facing America's national security today illustrate some pretty timeless lessons about how the world works—basic realities about geopolitics that were true before I got a front row seat to President Reagan's foreign policy 40 years ago and which are just as true today.

The first lesson is the value of alliances. America is the world's preeminent superpower—economically and militarily. But our influence and prosperity are facilitated by a network of partnerships. I don't mean this so-called international community of