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## Senate

The Senate met at 3 p.m. and was called to order by the Honorable TAMMY DUCKWORTH, a Senator from the State of Illinois.

### PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal God, we lift our hearts to You, the giver of wisdom, strength, and peace. Guide our lawmakers through the deliberations of this day. Lord, give them wisdom to work for justice and to advance Your kingdom on Earth. May they set a course for this Nation that unites people in dedication to truth, courage, and righteousness. Lord, empower our Senators to meet today's joys with gratitude, its difficulties with fortitude, and its duties with fidelity. Teach them to toil and to ask for nothing more than to know they are pleasing You.

We pray in Your merciful 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 assistant bill clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,  
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,  
Washington, DC, January 22, 2024.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby

appoint the Honorable TAMMY DUCKWORTH, a Senator from the State of Illinois, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATTY MURRAY,  
President pro tempore.

Ms. DUCKWORTH 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 assistant bill clerk read the nomination of Christopher Koos, of Illinois, to be a Director of the Amtrak Board of Directors for a term of five years.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

#### BORDER SECURITY

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, this week, Senator LANKFORD and several colleagues continue their work to finalize the most substantial border security policy in 30 years. This agreement would come not a moment too soon. Over the past 3 years, we have watched the flood of illegal immigration tick past 6.7 million encounters—6.7 million since President Biden took

office and an especially alarming surge just last year. December reportedly saw the highest monthly total for border encounters on record.

The President's open borders have meant booming business for the cartels who specialize in trafficking humans and smuggling drugs and far harsher realities for American communities grappling with lethal fentanyl and the thousands of people who have died trying to cross.

This is a crisis, whether the Washington Democrats are willing to call it one or not. The American people recognize what CBP and ICE are up against, even if their Commander in Chief does not. And the entire world understands what is at stake here in the Senate in the coming weeks.

America's national security begins with securing and maintaining our borders. It is a matter of basic sovereignty.

#### NATIONAL SECURITY

Mr. President, but we are also a global superpower with global responsibilities. We are facing serious, linked challenges on multiple fronts, and, once again, that is reality—whether or not our Commander in Chief acknowledges it.

In Europe, our closest allies and trading partners are one border away from facing the brunt of naked authoritarian aggression, and it took months for the Biden administration to grasp the urgency of that threat.

America's allies look to us to lead by example, to deliver decisive capabilities to Ukraine, and to step up investments in upgrading our arsenal and expanding our capacity to stock it.

But for months, getting the administration to authorize lethal capabilities to help beat back Putin's escalation was a little bit like pulling teeth. And, for years, the administration's defense budget requests have failed to demonstrate willingness to take the threats we face seriously.

Right now, at long last, our European allies are making serious commitments

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



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to carry their share of responsibilities of collective defense, and they are leading the pipeline of lethal assistance to Ukraine's war effort. This is encouraging, but it is not guaranteed forever. The West's leading power still has to behave like one and continue investing in our own strength.

Of course, on multiple fronts, our adversaries are not behaving like they have reason to fear American strength. China continues to back up its regional bullying with massive investments in hard power and long-range alliances with the enemies of America around the world. And Iran and its terrorist proxies demonstrate daily that the Biden administration's policy has left them fundamentally undeterred.

Undoubtedly, the terrorists enjoy watching the administration henpeck America's closest ally in the region and attempt to constrain Israel's response to their barbaric violence. They laugh at belated, half-hearted, unenforceable declarations of sanctions against tertiary characters on Iran's terrorist stage and at the President's half-measured strikes against low-value terrorist infrastructure.

So this isn't just a matter of vanity or optics. It is about a sober calculation of relative strength. The failure of American deterrence isn't just an embarrassment; it is a tragedy, and the price of which is now being measured in American lives. Today, the Pentagon confirmed the deaths of two Navy SEALs during operations to interdict Iranian weapons bound for Houthi terrorists on the high seas. They were young, exceptional warriors engaged in an enemy's brazen campaign to threaten America and their allies, and their comrades and loved ones are in our prayers.

Just this weekend, Iran's proxies attempted yet again to claim the lives of even more U.S. servicemembers. For at least the 150th time since October 7, terrorists used lethal force against Americans in Iraq and Syria. Several U.S. personnel are being treated for traumatic brain injuries resulting from these attacks, and frankly it is miraculous that this unchecked aggression hasn't exacted a higher price already.

Our adversaries are posing pretty fundamental questions about America's national security and the security of our allies and interests around the world. Will we act to secure America's sovereign borders and help our friends fighting for theirs?

Will we equip U.S. forces and our allies to meet aggression with overwhelming deterrent strength? Will we invest seriously in the cutting-edge capabilities and expanded capacity necessary to outpace our top strategic adversary?

Very soon, the responsibility to answer these questions will rest on the Senate, and we need to answer in the affirmative.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam 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.

ROE V. WADE

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, 51 years ago today, our Nation's highest Court issued a ruling that protected a woman's right to make the most fundamental choice in her life. Roe v. Wade enshrined into law that in America, women would have legal autonomy over their own bodies.

As a result of the constitutional protections in Roe, America's women took a giant step forward toward gender equity: being afforded the right to choose whether, when, and how to start a family.

But after nearly 50 years of progress, in June 2022, this Supreme Court overruled Roe in its Dobbs v. Women's Health Organization ruling, taking women's rights back half a century.

The Dobbs decision was a win for extreme conservative activists who waged a relentless campaign to capture the Supreme Court and overturn Roe v. Wade, but it was a tragic loss for women in America.

Take the case of Kate Cox, a married woman, mother of two, from Texas. Kate was elated to learn that she was pregnant with her third child. However, tests revealed that her baby had trisomy 18, a genetic condition that is almost always fatal very soon after birth. The prognosis was grim. Moreover, carrying the child could damage Kate's future fertility for another child.

Kate and her husband made one of the hardest decisions. They made the decision to go forward with an abortion. But in Texas where they live, it is illegal in nearly all circumstances. The Cox family hoped that the exception in Texas law for the life and health of the mother would allow her to terminate this ill-fated pregnancy.

Shockingly, it did not. Although a State court judge initially ruled that Kate could obtain an emergency abortion, Republican Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton immediately took legal steps to block Kate from receiving the care that she needed.

In addition to appealing the trial court's decision to the Texas Supreme Court, Attorney General Paxton sent a letter to hospitals and doctors, warning them that anyone involved in performing an abortion for Kate would face civil and criminal liability.

The Texas Supreme Court, controlled by Republicans, joined in the rule against Kate. She was forced to leave her home State and go across State lines to terminate the pregnancy.

Let's take the case of Brittany Watts, a 34-year-old from Ohio. Brittany was arrested after miscarrying in her bathroom. Thankfully, just 2 weeks ago, a grand jury with empathy, com-

mon sense, and reason declined to indict her, understanding that miscarriages are devastating and extremely common, a pregnancy outcome that women should not be punished for.

But in a post-Roe America, these are the horrific situations that women and the doctors who provide them care often face. Republican politicians in States like Texas and Ohio have made it clear they do not trust the judgment of women and their families in these matters.

But even amidst this devastation unleashed by Dobbs, Democrats continue to fight for women. In our home State of Illinois, we have become an oasis for women in an area that otherwise would be left without abortion options. New data shows the number of women traveling to our State of Illinois for abortions rose nearly 50 percent in 2022, and we experienced the largest increase of any State in the number of patients traveling out of State for abortions last year. Remember, in each and every case, there is the cost and burden of travel as a part of this calculation.

Our commitment to reproductive health has real-world impacts. In June of 2022, Margaret from Cook County, IL, lost her son. She was devastated. But one thing that made the experience less painful was living in a State that respected her right to make healthcare decisions privately with her doctor. Only a week after Margaret lost her son, Roe was overruled, throwing women's bodily autonomy and reproductive freedom in States across the country into real uncertainty but, fortunately, not in Illinois.

Margaret wrote to my office and said:

I cannot stress how awful it was to lose a child I loved so much, but how glad I was to be in Illinois when this devastating thing happened.

We are proud to be a State that fights for women. But there are consequences to blue States meeting increased demand for abortion care.

More than 28 million women of reproductive age live in States where abortion is banned, unavailable, or restricted—28 million American women living in those States. When thousands of women are forced to go out of State to get an abortion, it increases wait times for people in blue States, and it puts enormous stress on providers and clinics. Moreover, not every woman is able to afford the trip, find childcare, and take time off to travel to another State. This creates inequities for those who are trying to access safe and legal abortion.

One thing is clear: Dobbs does not stop abortion. In fact, the numbers show us quite the opposite has happened. The data shows that in the year following the Dobbs decision, abortions actually increased nationwide. Moreover, public opinion polls show that the majority of Americans still support abortion rights. And from the States of Kansas to Kentucky, in every State where it has been put on the ballot, abortion and the rights of women to