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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Thursday, January 25, 2024, at 3 p.m.

Senate

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 24, 2024

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable PETER WELCH, a Senator from the State of Vermont.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal God who rules the raging of the sea, draw our Senators to You today by the cords of Your eternal love. Help them to strive to know You, cultivating a relationship of peaceful trust in Your prevailing providence. May the experience of being in Your presence enable them to better comprehend the role You desire for them to play in fulfilling Your purposes on Earth. Sharpen their vision to perceive Your movements in our Nation and world. Where there is anxiety, give our lawmakers the poise that comes from a confident faith in 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 senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, January 24, 2024.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable PETER WELCH, a Senator from the State of Vermont, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATTY MURRAY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. WELCH 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 Jacquelyn D.

Austin, of South Carolina, to be United States District Judge for the District of South Carolina.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, well, the latest round of Ukrainian security assistance was a \$250 million package that included 155mm rounds, Stinger anti-aircraft missiles, and other critical weapons that have been crucial for Ukraine on the battlefield. That announcement was made on December 27. That is 28 days ago—4 weeks. Since then, no more aid—no more aid—has been sent to Ukraine. And there won't be more unless Congress acts.

In the meantime, it has been reported that Russia is beginning to restock its own supplies with help from North Korea, including North Korean missiles.

Right now, Senate negotiators on both sides are working furiously to approve another round of Ukraine aid by finalizing our national security supplemental package. This package would not only deliver a lifeline for Ukraine, it would secure our border, send aid to Israel, provide humanitarian assistance for innocent civilians in Gaza, and shore up security in the Indo-Pacific. Our supplemental is a prescription for addressing America's top security threats around the globe.

Now, it has been a busy and productive week for the negotiators. They have continued working nonstop on issues that are still outstanding. Each

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



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day, we get a little closer, but there are still issues to be resolved. But one thing is certain: We are going to keep going to get this done.

I have remained in touch with my Senate colleagues, with Leader McCONNELL, and the White House every step of the way. The goal, of course, is to come up with a proposal that can get at least 60 votes in the Senate. That means both sides must accept they won't get everything they want. It means that maximalist demands, stonewall tactics, and attempts to sabotage negotiations before they even finish must be shunned by the membership of this body. There is too much at stake to play those games.

There are some on the fringes who are, unfortunately, though, trying to do precisely that: to sink this supplemental package from afar. But in the Senate, both sides have an obligation to ensure those voices stay in the minority. Many of the voices who are making suggestions that they don't like are not voting for this anyway—anyway.

It is not going to be easy to get over the finish line. But Senate Democrats are going to stay the course—stay the course—until the job is done.

President Biden, on numerous occasions, has stated he is willing to work with Republicans in a big way on immigration. And for over 2 months, Democrats have shown we are serious about reaching an agreement by remaining at the negotiating table. So we will keep going because Senators don't need to be reminded of the consequences should we fail.

Like I said, the last round of Ukrainian aid happened on December 27. If we don't act, Ukraine will fall and make the world a much more dangerous place for America. And every day, Americans will feel the impact—not years but months away.

Since the start of the war, Putin has bet that sooner or later, the United States would throw in the towel. They doubt Western resolve. They doubt American strength. Just last month, Putin speculated on Russian television that “the free stuff is going to run out some day, and it seems it already is.” That is what Putin is saying. He is gloating that we are not giving Ukraine the aid it needs. His allies are certainly helping him.

The Senate has an obligation to make sure Putin regrets the day he questioned America's resolve, and that is putting the focus on what we are doing in this Chamber.

We have an obligation to answer the call to defend democracy in its hour of need. We have an obligation to help our friends fighting for their survival.

We must—must—finish the work on the supplemental. We are not there yet, but we will continue working.

ECONOMY

Mr. President, on the economy, we are not even a month into 2024, and a new pattern is emerging. Americans are feeling more and more optimistic

about the economy. Last week, a report by the University of Michigan showed that consumer sentiment—how consumers feel about the economy—surged by 29 percent over the last 2 months—the biggest 2-month increase in over 3 decades—in over 30 years. Higher consumer sentiment means Americans have more money in their pockets and are feeling better about their financial future.

That is precisely what the Democratic agenda is all about: lowering costs, increasing wages, fueling economic growth. That is why Democrats passed historic legislation like the Inflation Reduction Act, the CHIPS and Science Act, the infrastructure law, and more.

When you pass an ambitious agenda like the ones the Democrats have passed under President Biden, it can take some time for the effects to take hold. But by now, the signs are getting clearer and clearer: Under President Biden, under Democratic leadership, the country is on the right track. Real wages are rising. In fact, paychecks have outpaced inflation over the past year, meaning people's paychecks are going further. Inflation is cooling down, now to 3.4 percent. When we passed the Inflation Reduction Act, it was over 8 percent.

Unemployment is falling. The economy created 2.7 million new jobs last year, more jobs than any year of the Trump administration.

And manufacturing investment levels are at an all-time high—again, more than double the peak of the Trump administration.

That is the difference between Democratic and Republican leadership. When Democrats were elected into office, we passed legislation to lower costs, to bring American manufacturing back, to lower prescription drug costs—which is already happening—and invest in science and innovation.

But what about the hard right? What about what is going with our Republican colleagues? Well, look at what they spend time talking about: shutting down the government.

That is what the hard right does. We are getting things done for the American people; they are talking about shutting down the government, pushing America toward default. Amazingly, the hard right, which has a lot of sway in the House and too much in the Senate, said default would be a good thing. Attacking a woman's right to choose, wasting time on sham impeachments, and drastic cuts to veterans' aid, nutrition programs, education, Federal law enforcement, no wonder some Republicans are so concerned they have no real accomplishments to show the American people.

The difference, frankly, is night and day: Democrats are focused on lowering costs, more jobs, and more money in people's pockets, but the hard right is consumed by chaos, bullying, cutting vital investments, making things worse. They want to make things worse. Somehow that is their credo.

The Republican frontrunner for President has made it abundantly clear that he is not running on making people's lives better but rather on airing his personal political grievances, as we saw in last night's so-called victory speech.

So we still have a long way to go to make our economy better—working better for families—but the evidence is growing that under President Biden, we are headed in the right direction, and Americans are seeing it for themselves.

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, Vladimir Putin's reelection campaign is employing a slogan that the Russian people—and the rest of the world—have actually heard before. Here is what it is: “Russia's borders do not end anywhere.”

“Russia's borders do not end anywhere.” That is Vladimir Putin.

The map of Europe illustrates what he means in the starkest possible terms. A brazen war of conquest is headed toward its 11th year. Two years of Russia's brutal escalation in Ukraine has subjected a sovereign nation to horrific losses and heinous war crimes.

Since well before Russian troops made their first run toward Kyiv in February of 2022, I have been pushing for the decisive capabilities Ukraine needed to defend itself. And I have held President Biden to account for not doing more sooner to give our friends a decisive edge against Putin's aggression and for not investing more seriously in rebuilding America's military strength.

But I have never been under any delusion about why America was backing Ukraine's fight. This has never been about charity. It is not about charity. It is not about virtue signaling or abstract principles of international relations.

This is about cold, hard American interests. It is in the United States' direct interest for authoritarians not to feel free to redraw maps by force. It is in our interest to help degrade the military of a major adversary without committing American lives to the effort. It is in our interest to help blunt aggressive behavior before it triggers wider conflict and directly threatens our closest allies and trading partners.

We cannot pretend that America is inoculated against the consequences of a war in Europe. We can't afford to