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Senate

The Senate met at 3 p.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.

O God of time and eternity, we come to You not because we are perfect but because we trust Your mercy, power, and grace. By Your grace we are able to triumph over evil, living no longer for ourselves but for You.

Lord, give our Senators a vision of the goals that produce righteousness, honor, justice, and peace. Empower them to serve the marginalized, to bear the burdens of freedom, and to labor for Your glory. Give them the gifts of Your light, love, and laughter.

Lord, we are grateful for our new page class, and we thank You for the exemplary life and legacy of Bobbi Barrasso.

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 legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, January 30, 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 LEADERSHIP 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 legislative clerk read the nomination Joshua Paul Kolar, of Indiana, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Seventh Circuit.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, all through the weekend, negotiators continued their work on the national security supplemental. We are approaching the finish line, but the work is not done. We will continue to finish the supplemental. We will do everything we can to get the supplemental done because, for all the day-to-day intrigue, the big picture has not changed: This is an inflection point in history, where the balance of power in Europe,

the future of Israel in the Middle East, and the fate of the Indo-Pacific hang in the balance. And, for the first time in over a decade, we have a golden opportunity to make meaningful, lasting changes to the southern border—the best chance we will likely have in a good while. So we have an obligation to the American people to get something done.

Now, Republicans in the House and Senate have insisted for years that Congress must make border security a top priority. The speeches, statements, op-eds, and tweets that Republicans have issued on border legislation could fill entire libraries. And we Democrats agree. We want to get something done on the border. We have negotiated with our Republican counterparts for months to get something done.

Look, it is entirely unsurprising and truly disappointing, at the same time, that many on the hard right, including Donald Trump, are now trying to thwart this bipartisan effort for the sake of electoral politics. But here in the Senate, both sides have an obligation to tune the partisan noise out and to continue working. Bipartisanship is the only way that action on the border is going to happen, that aid to Ukraine will be secured, that help to Israel and to the Indo-Pacific and aid to innocent civilians in Gaza will happen.

So for all the noise and partisan posturing, the big picture here does not change. The Senate will continue working on the supplemental this week. We know this is hard—very hard—but Democrats and Republicans in this Chamber have an obligation to tune out the outside noise and finish the work of protecting our national security.

ABORTION

Mr. President, now on the Texas Pregnancy Study, last week, on what should have been the 51st anniversary of Roe v. Wade, I called the decision to overturn Roe one of the worst, most damaging decisions for Americans in modern history.

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



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Just a couple of days later, a horrifying new study was released in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, showing the devastating effects of the Roe reversal for women in America. According to this study, the State of Texas alone saw over 26,000 rape-related pregnancies in the year and a half since Texas outlawed all abortions, with zero exceptions for rape.

Let me say that again because the results are staggering, confounding, frightening: According to a new study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, the State of Texas alone saw over 26,000 rape-related pregnancies in the year and a half since Texas outlawed all abortions, and they have zero exceptions for rape.

There are over 58,000 total rape-related pregnancies in States with total abortion bans and zero exceptions for rape.

The numbers from this study are shocking. They are heartbreaking. And it is all the more maddening because the hard-right abortion restrictions in Texas are as cruel as they come: forced pregnancies, no exception for rape, no exception for incest.

Not long ago, the abortion restrictions in Texas would have been considered on the fringe of the fringe. Today, sadly, it is a reality for women in post-Roe America.

Make no mistake about it—an America where abortion is outlawed with zero exceptions is precisely—precisely—what the hard right wants. The hard right doesn't care about exceptions, even for rape or incest. They want the freedom of choice to be extinct, period—no ands, ifs, or buts. Democrats will never let that stand. We will never stop fighting to protect a woman's right to choose. And Republicans won't be able to run from this horror they created later this year when the American people go to the polls.

THE ECONOMY

Mr. President, now on the economy, the outlook for the American economy continues to get brighter and brighter under the leadership of President Biden and Democrats here in Congress.

Last week, a report showed that consumer sentiment surged by nearly 30 percent over the last 2 months. And Americans received even more good news this week. The American economy far exceeded expectations in the last quarter of 2023, growing at a rate of 3.3 percent and avoiding even a hint of a recession.

The hard right predicted that Democrats' investments would drive our country to a recession, but today, American families are seeing more money in their pockets, low unemployment, and inflation cooling down.

The bottom line is that the American economy is headed in the right direction thanks to Democrats investing in our infrastructure, increasing manufacturing through CHIPS and Science, and lifting our country from crisis

through the American Rescue Plan. I am proud to say that in all three, Senate Democrats, whether in the minority or majority, played a leading role.

The economy is now on an upswing, so much so that Republicans and even the former President are trying to take credit. After the Dow Jones and S&P hit record highs last week, Donald Trump deployed a spin job for the ages, calling it the "Trump stock market." You can't make that up. Four years ago, Donald Trump predicted the stock market would crash if he lost the election. Well, Donald Trump did lose the election, but today, the stock market is setting record highs.

It is both laughable and very telling that Donald Trump is trying to take credit for the successes of President Biden and the congressional Democrats. Donald Trump knows his disastrous and chaotic record can't stand scrutiny against the jobs, increased wages, and investments secured by Democrats.

Of course, Donald Trump is hardly the only Republican taking credit for Democrats' successes. Around the country, scores of congressional Republicans are attending groundbreakings, and they are going to ribbon-cutting ceremonies and factory openings for projects they voted against in Congress, but the Democrats in the House and Senate prevailed.

Last week, a Minnesota GOP Congressman cheered the announcement of \$1 billion for a new bridge in his district, saying he was "proud to have worked with my Minnesota and Wisconsin congressional colleagues to secure this critical investment." There is only one problem: 2 years ago, this very GOP Member voted against the infrastructure bill that provided these funds, stating at the time:

I will not be complicit in paving a destructive and irreversible path towards socialism.

Well, there he was at the bridge. There he was at the bridge.

A few days later, another GOP Congresswoman from Florida tried to take credit on air for \$40 million in funding that came from bills she voted against in Congress, including the CHIPS and Science bill, which I was proud to have authored. I hope she will give me a pat on the back. When pressed on her voting record, her excuse was she didn't remember her vote.

This is going to be a pattern we are going to see all year long. Without any accomplishments of their own to talk about, Republicans in the House and Senate will try to take credit for jobs and investments they opposed in Congress.

Well, that is the difference between the Democratic and Republican agenda. Democrats are working hard to lower costs, increase wages, and fuel economic growth, while Republicans are creating chaos and then taking credit for our work.

If Republicans want to keep claiming credit, I encourage them: Work with us. Pass bipartisan legislation, and

then you can proudly go to these events without contradiction.

We still have a long way to go to make our economy work better for families, so there will be plenty of opportunities for Republicans to work with us.

I yield the floor.

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. 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.

IRAN

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, 2 weeks ago, after nearly 150 Iran-backed attacks on U.S. personnel in Iraq and Syria, a reporter asked President Biden if he had a message for Iran. The President confidently replied:

I've already delivered the message to Iran. They know not to do anything.

The Commander in Chief had the temerity to suggest that the world's most active state sponsor of terrorism was effectively deterred. Repeated attacks since then, including a deadly attack in Jordan that killed three American soldiers and injured dozens more, suggest otherwise.

SGT William Rivers, SPC Kennedy Sanders, and SPC Breonna Moffett now rest with generations of brave Americans before them who have given their lives in service to our country. I know my colleagues join me in grieving with the families and comrades they leave behind.

For 3 years, the threat of Iran-backed terror against American personnel and interests in the Middle East has been growing. Iran is emboldened and believes it can use its proxies to attack America with impunity.

The Biden administration has hastened this erosion of deterrence. Their public hand-wringing and fear of escalation send exactly the wrong message to Tehran and other enemies of America. To paraphrase Henry Kissinger, when our primary objective becomes avoiding war or escalation, we are at the mercy of our most ruthless adversaries.

The United States' objective is not to avoid escalation at all costs. If it was, the quickest way to achieve it would be to retreat and cede the whole Middle East to Iran. Instead, our objective is to compel Iran and its proxies to stop attacking American forces and our interests in the region and to preserve American influence in a critical part of the world. But to achieve this objective, we have to convince our adversaries that we are prepared to escalate and to threaten the interests that they hold dear. If the Iranian regime thinks America is most afraid of escalation, it