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Senate

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.

Almighty God, eternal and unchangeable, You have ordained that day follows night and that in trials we find our triumph.

Keep our lawmakers aware of Your goodness and mercies that never fail. Lord, lift our Senators above contention to an optimism that trusts the unfolding of Your prevailing providence. May they also live with the awareness that our times are in Your hands.

Lord, give our legislators the wisdom to rededicate themselves to the doing of Your will so that this Nation may yet shine with the beauty of righteousness, justice, and peace.

And, Lord, remember the families of the servicemembers killed in the Jordan drone attack.

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, January 31, 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 shall report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Karoline Mehalchick, of Pennsylvania, to be United States District Judge for the Middle District of Pennsylvania.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, every last Member of this body knows what is on the line as we work on the national security supplemental. From securing our southern border to helping

our friends in Israel and innocent civilians in Gaza, to showing strength in the Indo-Pacific, and, of course, standing with Ukraine, the Senate's very resolve and courage is being put to the test.

A month ago, I said the only way we will rise to the occasion is if both sides are serious about finding a bipartisan compromise. The negotiation was never going to be easy. In fact, we all knew it would be immensely difficult.

Nevertheless, I said Democrats were willing to treat these negotiations with the seriousness they deserve. And for months, we have been true to our word, working with Republicans on border security, listening to their proposals, and coming to agreement on a vast range of issues.

We have not concluded negotiations. So we will keep going to get this done.

Democrats have always been ready and willing to have a debate on the border. We want to get this done. We have continued to work to get this done, and we remain committed—we remain committed—to bipartisanship. Both sides will have to give.

It is unfortunate, but, frankly, not surprising, that many on the hard right are mightily trying to sink the bipartisan work happening here in the Senate. But, in the Senate, our responsibility is clear: We need to put the needs of our country above the interests of party politics because the security of our southern border is on the line; the security of Israel is on the line; the health and safety of innocent Gaza civilians are on the line; the stability of the Indo-Pacific region is on the line; and, finally, as every Senator on both sides knows, the survival of Ukraine is on the line.

It will be 2 years since Vladimir Putin began his illegal, savage campaign against the Ukrainian people. American military assistance has been one of the most important lifelines for Ukrainian fighters since the start of the war, but now that aid has run out.

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



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Congressional action is required if we want to send additional military assistance.

The matter here is very simple, as President Zelenskyy told us in December. Ukraine will win the war against Russia if more aid is approved by Congress, but, if no more aid is approved, Putin will win.

We dare not hand Eastern Europe over to Vladimir Putin. The supplemental is how we ensure that Western democracy is protected.

The work is not easy. It is very hard. There are still some issues outstanding, but we remain committed to bipartisanship, and we will keep working because we want to get this done.

IMPEACHMENT

Mr. President, on the Mayorkas impeachment effort in the House, last night, while most Americans were fast asleep, a House committee voted to advance the absurd effort to impeach Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas.

The Republican House majority is moving forward with the sham impeachment effort, despite producing no evidence that Secretary Mayorkas has committed any crime. House Republicans have not shown that he has violated the Constitution. House Republicans have failed to present any evidence of anything resembling an impeachable offense.

Instead, what House Republicans are doing by advancing the sham impeachment effort is denigrating our Constitution, all for the sake of appeasing one person and one person only, Donald Trump.

And let this be clear: This unserious spectacle by House Republicans does nothing—nothing—to secure our border.

While Senators on both sides of the aisle are actually negotiating in good faith on border security, House Republicans keep exploiting the border only for political gain—only to help Donald Trump on the campaign trail—instead of working to solve the problem.

There have already been many shameful and embarrassing moments in the Republican House majority, but abusing the Constitution by pursuing this sham impeachment effort is a new, ignominious low.

MIFEPRISTONE

Mr. President, on the mifepristone amicus brief, yesterday I signed on to an amicus brief with over 260 of my Democratic colleagues urging the Supreme Court to reverse a dangerous circuit court ruling restricting access to mifepristone. We just learned that the Supreme Court will hear this case on March 26.

The FDA ruled mifepristone safe over two decades ago, but the hard right continues to seek its prohibition. The hard right's attacks on a drug that has been deemed safe for two decades shows how unhinged and limitless their desire is to eliminate freedom of choice in America. And the consequences of the hard right's anti-women agenda has al-

ready proven destructive to an appalling degree.

New research shows that there is a significant increase in the number of rape-related pregnancies—rape-related pregnancies. This is truly horrific. All survivors of sexual violence deserve access to a full range of physical and mental healthcare services; but, tragically, today they don't have that. This is the new reality for women in a post-Roe America.

These extreme abortion bans have caused chaos and inflicted irreparable harm to thousands of women whose stories we will never hear. Democrats will not stand by and watch the hard right continue its all-out assault on reproductive rights. We will continue fighting to protect a woman's right to choose. We will not stop until we prevail.

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.

BURMA

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, it has been 3 years since a thuggish military coup derailed prospects for democracy, unity, and self-determination in Burma. The military—or Tatmadaw—has engaged in a ruthless, systematic war against the people of Burma. This war has displaced roughly 2½ million people. Last year alone, it claimed over 15,000 lives.

And, of course, the junta has placed tens of thousands of innocent people behind bars for opposing the military regime. Right now, nearly 2,000 members of the National League for Democracy, Burma's leading pro-democracy party, are being unjustly held as political prisoners, as are many others from all corners of Burma's society and its myriad ethnic groups.

Undoubtedly, the most well-known political prisoner is my friend Aung San Suu Kyi. For the longtime leader of Burma's pro-democracy movement and for the hopes she represents, I can only imagine the 3 years of pain, suffering, and frustration.

I would hope my colleagues would join me, on this third anniversary of the coup, in calling for the unconditional release of all political prisoners in Burma. In the face of sustained repression and brutal violence, the people of Burma continue to resist. Working together, increasingly across ethnic and religious lines, they continue to defy the heavy fist of the junta. In recent months, forces resisting the Tatmadaw have conducted promising counteroffensives and drawn significant defections from the ranks of the

pro-junta military. They are determined to establish a new democratic Burma committed to coexistence, justice, and the rule of law.

As I have said repeatedly, the world must encourage and support their efforts. The United States must urge more of our allies and partners to join in applying maximum pressure to the ruling junta, to state-owned enterprises like the MOGE, and to their enablers abroad.

There is also more the Biden administration can do to help the people of Burma. For one, it is past time to implement the bipartisan BURMA Act and deploy its new authorities and resources to engage and provide non-lethal assistance to those struggling to resist the junta, including ethnic groups and organizations on the frontlines of this terrible conflict.

The conflict in Burma is not just about freedom or justice. It has also been a boon to China and Russia. Both of our adversaries have armed the Tatmadaw for a healthy profit and growing influence. Beijing also has its eyes on critical infrastructure projects it sees as expanding its strategic reach into the Indian Ocean. Foremost among these is a \$7 billion deepwater port in Rakhyne State.

I would encourage my colleagues to look at a map and consider just where this complicated country of more than 50 million people sits. Geography may not exactly be destiny, but it certainly matters. The outcome of the conflict will matter in the geostrategic competition unfolding all across Asia.

Throughout my career, I have been proud to be a voice for my friend Aung San Suu Kyi and for her fellow democracy advocates in Burma. I have been proud to celebrate their remarkable progress and to call attention to their setbacks and ongoing struggle. And the American people should be proud that so many are willing to risk so much to follow their example of self-government.

As the people of Burma begin to turn the tide of the conflict, I will continue to stand with them against the Tatmadaw thugs who seek to snuff out the bright light of their future. I hope my colleagues, the administration, and America's friends in the region and democratic countries around the world will do the same.

PRESCRIPTION DRUG COSTS

Mr. President, now, on another subject, tomorrow the world-leading innovators that have produced medical cures here in America will face yet another compliance deadline from Washington Democrats' price-fixing scheme. As I have discussed before, the so-called Inflation Reduction Act includes a price-fixing mechanism that requires drug manufacturers to agree to a crooked negotiation process, pay an excessive fine or take their drugs off the market.

By February 1, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, CMS, are required to send each drug company a