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Senate

The Senate met at 10:01 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable JON OSSOFF, a Senator from the State of Georgia.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Gracious God, turn Your ears to listen to us. Without You, we are but disappearing dust. Draw near to us, for in Your presence, we find our dignity and destiny. Lord, breathe into us the saving knowledge that we belong to You. May this awareness inspire us to live for Your glory. Guide our lawmakers. Remind them that they can depend on You for the vindication of every just cause, the forgiveness of every confessed sin, and the protection from every weapon that is formed against them. May they trust You to give them strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow.

We pray in Your wonderful 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, May 1, 2024.

To the Senate:

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

Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable JON OSSOFF, a Senator from the State of Georgia, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATTY MURRAY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. OSSOFF 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 Georgia N. Alexakis, of Illinois, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of Illinois.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

(The remarks of Mr. SCHUMER pertaining to the submission of S. 4226 are printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

BUSINESS BEFORE THE SENATE

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, now, on Senate business, a very busy period has just ended for the Senate, and another one begins.

This morning, the Senate will vote on the confirmation of Georgia

Alexakis to be a district judge for the Northern District of Illinois. Once confirmed, she will be the 195th Federal judge confirmed under President Biden.

On the legislative front, the next deadline Congress faces is May 10. That is the date by which the President must sign the FAA reauthorization. The Senate will begin the work of FAA reauthorization this afternoon by holding our first procedural vote on this bill. Both parties have an incentive to work together to get FAA done as quickly and as smoothly as we can to keep our skies safe and our Federal employees well taken care of.

Getting FAA reauthorization done will provide for more air traffic controllers, for more safety inspectors at manufacturing plants, and better customer service standards—all of which are so badly needed.

So I hope the Senate can get this important piece of legislation done with as much bipartisan good will as possible.

ABORTION

Mr. President, now, on the Florida abortion ban, this morning, unfortunately, the people of Florida woke up to one of the cruelest, most extreme, most dangerous abortion bans in the country. Starting today, Florida is outlawing most abortions after just 6 weeks—just 6 weeks—before many women even know that they are pregnant.

Let me say that again because the American people need to hear what Republican States are doing. A new Florida law goes into effect today that bans most abortions after just 6 weeks, before many women even know they are pregnant.

Florida's new abortion ban is draconian to the core. It rips away women's freedom to make their own decisions about their bodies. It blocks thousands of women from accessing basic reproductive care. And, horrifically, it leaves millions of women across the Southeast—already an abortion care desert—with little or no options.

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



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If you live anywhere in the Southeast, the odds are now that you need to drive as far as Virginia or farther just to get reproductive care, a burden most people can't realistically take on. It is utter cruelty.

Sadly, abortion bans like the ones in Florida didn't happen in a vacuum. Today is yet another consequence of the hard-right MAGA Supreme Court's disastrous decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade*. It is the consequence of decades of the hard right trying to pack our courts with radical jurists.

In case people forgot, President Donald Trump proudly reminded us a month ago that he and MAGA Republicans are to blame for the annihilation of *Roe*. To this day, the former President and MAGA Republicans continue to boast of their radical views on abortion, despite those views being widely out of step with the American people.

Let us not forget that the majority of Floridians—the vast majority—don't agree with Florida's new abortion ban, much less the vast majority of Americans.

Make no mistake, Republicans will have to answer for their anti-abortion records today, tomorrow, and at the ballot box in November.

FARM BILL

Mr. President, now, on the farm bill that Senator STABENOW is introducing today, I want to applaud the efforts of my good friend and colleague Chairwoman STABENOW of the Senate Agriculture Committee, who, today, is releasing the substance of our farm bill.

Senate Democrats want to get a farm bill done. It is an essential bill that does so much good across the country, and I thank Chair STABENOW for her tough leadership on the issue.

Particularly, this bill is a strong bill and includes some very important provisions. It protects the interests of small farmers. It protects crucial climate funding to help farmers from things like natural disasters. And it provides robust nutrition assistance that directly helps millions of kids across the country.

I salute Senator STABENOW for her hard, good work on this bill. Again, Democrats want to get a farm bill done, and Senator STABENOW has done outstanding work leading this effort.

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 PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. WELCH). Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Republican leader is recognized.

ISRAEL

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I spoke yesterday about the failures of America's so-called elite universities

to maintain academic rigor, student safety, and basic order as their faculty and students become more radicalized.

The most alarming aspect of this chaos on campuses is the brazen expressions of anti-Semitism, but the world's oldest form of hate isn't just driving self-appointed student commissars to intimidate Jewish students and grind campus life to a halt. Half a world away, deep and virulent hatred of the Jewish people and a refusal to even acknowledge the Jewish State of Israel's right to exist is what animates the world's most active state sponsor of terrorism and motivates its network of proxies to carry out barbaric violence like the attacks of October 7.

We are not talking about imagined sins of some postmodern, anti-colonial theory. We are talking about the intentional—torture, hostage-taking, rape, and murder of civilians. And these same forces also loathe Israel's closest ally, the United States—the “Great Satan.” They attack American personnel. They threaten American interests and global commerce.

But just as college administrators fail to restore order amid anti-Semitic chaos on campus, the Biden administration is failing to compel a murderous adversary to stop spilling Israeli and American blood alike. Rather than helping Israel destroy the terrorists or impose consequences on Tehran sufficient to abandon its strategy of terror, the Commander in Chief seems to be most concerned with restraining our closest ally in the Middle East from doing everything necessary to restore its security.

At nearly every step, the Biden administration has tried to prevent, slow, or micromanage Israel's efforts to pursue Hamas terrorists. It is as if the President wants the appearance of calm and a respite from inconvenient headlines rather than a decisive victory over terrorists that can lead to a just and lasting peace.

The micromanagement is accompanied by flights of pure fantasy. It is all well and good for administration officials to express hope for the prospects of a future two-state solution, but it is about time they started dealing in the present day, where the dominant power on the Palestinian side doesn't even want one. Hamas makes no secret of its aspirations to destroy Israel “from the river to the sea.” And, remember, geographically, that means the entirety of the Jewish State.

Neither, sadly, do the thousands of American college students who have taken up this genocidal refrain. Whether these campus agitators even grasp its implication is really beside the point. Hamas and its backers in Tehran know the score.

Let's deal in the real world, where successive, corrupt Palestinian leaders have rejected reasonable proposals for peaceful coexistence and where cease-fire was the nominal state of affairs be-

fore savage terrorists exploited it on October 7.

To the extent that a Palestinian state is achievable or even merited, it will not be as a reward for terror. If Palestinian leaders want a state for their people, they should first demonstrate that they care more about their own people than lining their own pockets. They must rid themselves of terrorists who care more about killing Jews than building a tolerant society.

Bottom line: If the Biden administration wants to put Israelis and Palestinians back on a path toward peaceful coexistence, they ought to help Israel destroy Hamas and curb Iran's influence in the region. That would require—for one thing—the United States getting serious about the operational challenges our ally faces. Instead, the administration seems focused on virtue signaling and political theatre to appease the leftist agitators of their base.

How else should we interpret the President's decision to build a massively expensive floating pier off the coast of Gaza or his willingness to staff it with American military personnel within cruise missile and UAV range of terrorists who have specifically—specifically—threatened to target any forces affiliated with the pier?

This isn't just an idle threat. Terrorists have already conducted mortar attacks against the marshaling area for the humanitarian pier. This isn't a cost-free State of the Union talking point; it is an avoidable catastrophe. The President's decision places American servicemembers at unnecessary risk. It is exorbitantly more expensive and inefficient than existing land crossings into Gaza. And besides, the problem isn't getting humanitarian assistance to Gaza; it is getting the assistance distributed to Palestinian civilians before Hamas fighters commandeer it.

What more evidence do we need that Hamas can play no part—no part—in the future of the Palestinian people? What other signs do we need that Israel's fight to eliminate the terrorists deserves America's support? Let's be clear: We cannot aim for the status quo ante. October 7 was only the most recent bloody manifestation of the reach of Iran's proxy network.

America's focus—our primary objective—in support of our ally Israel and our interests in the region has to be imposing real costs on the chaos agents in Tehran, forcing them to change their violent calculus, ending their support for terror, and making it harder for them to support other violent aggression further afield, like Russia's war in Ukraine.

Of course, all of that starts with making serious investments in our own defense. U.S. operations in defense of Israel and the freedom of navigation have made the steep costs of preserving peace and prosperity abundantly clear. The past several months have illustrated the undeniable urgency of expanding production of missile defense