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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.

Lord of all nations, illuminate the hearts of our Senators today. Enable them to shine Your light into our Nation and world, not to glorify themselves but to honor You. Give them the power of ethical fitness that will enable them to reinforce lofty rhetoric with righteous actions. As they face daunting challenges, lift the light of Your countenance upon them. Lord, keep them from growing weary in doing what is right as You remind them of the certainty of a bountiful harvest. Help them to see the great results that come from seeking to do Your will.

We pray in Your mighty 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, February 5, 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.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, yesterday evening, after months of persistence, hard work, and arduous negotiations, a bipartisan group of Senators released the text of the emergency national security supplemental package. The bipartisan package is 4 long, tireless months in the making. Everyone worked doggedly to piece this bill together, from Senators to Senate staff, to the Biden administration. I must have called the negotiators hundreds of times, calling every day, multiple times a day.

I want to thank President Biden for his leadership and for making it clear from day one that he was willing to compromise with Republicans to get this agreement done.

I wish to thank my Senate colleagues who worked ceaselessly on this package—including Senators MURPHY, SINEMA, LANKFORD, MURRAY, COLLINS—as well as Secretary Mayorkas and the rest of the administration. And all of our staffs worked so long and so diligently. We are blessed in the Senate to have great, hard-working, dedicated staffs.

Now, at times, I know it seemed as if negotiations would fall off the tracks. Many on the outside rooted loudly for this effort to fail. But everyone persisted and persisted. Even in dark moments, I reminded my colleagues of the immense stakes in this bill, and, to their everlasting credit, they kept moving forward. And now we have a bill.

The \$64,000 question now is whether or not Senators can drown out the outside noise, drown out people like Donald Trump who want chaos, and do the right thing for America. I urge Senators of goodwill on both sides of the aisle to do the right thing and tune the chaos out. History is going to look over our shoulders and ask if the Senate rose to the occasion. We must—we must—act.

In a few moments, I will file cloture on the motion to proceed to the vehicle of the national security supplemental. This vote will be the most important that the Senate has taken in a very long time to ensure America's future prosperity and security. That is how important the vote on this national security supplemental is.

Senators should expect the first vote on this bill to come Wednesday. Everyone will have had 3 days to read this bill before taking a vote. We must keep working until the job is done. Passing this bill is too important to let the calendar get in the way.

Getting to this point was never guaranteed. A security package that includes bipartisan border legislation is one of the hardest things the Senate has tackled in years. From the start, I said the only way we would succeed was if both sides were serious about reaching a bipartisan package. I worked very hard to give negotiators the space they needed to do their work and to create an environment where bipartisanship could take root.

Many on the hard right wanted to hijack this process by demanding we take up H.R. 2, but I made clear the

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



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only bill I would bring to the floor was one that could win bipartisan support. Not a single Democrat in the House or Senate voted for H.R. 2.

Today, I am proud that, after 4 months of hard negotiations, we indeed have a bipartisan agreement that is a product of compromise, hard work, and persistence. I am hopeful that enough Senators understand that this bill is too important—too important—to let politics get in the way, because, if we fail the Ukrainian people, then Vladimir Putin will likely succeed in his invasion of Ukraine. Putin will be emboldened, and Western democracy will face the greatest threat it has seen in decades.

If we don't help Israel defend itself against Hamas, the dangers of another October 7 will persist, and the war in the Middle East could grow much worse.

If we don't deliver humanitarian aid to Gaza, countless of innocent Palestinian civilians will be denied life-saving assistance that cannot wait.

And if we don't secure our border right now, the crisis our Republican colleagues talk about so much is only—only—going to get worse.

Everyone agrees the border is a mess. For years—years—our Republican colleagues have demanded we fix the border. All along, they said it should be done through legislation. Only recently did they change that, when it looked like we might actually produce legislation.

Well, we are producing legislation in a bipartisan way, and, now, unfortunately, many on the hard right are running, are turning their back on this package. Everyone is asking the same question: Are MAGA Republicans serious about fixing the border or is this merely political?

If Senate Democrats wrote this national security supplemental entirely on our own, of course, it would look different. But we live in an era of divided government, and that means that both sides have to compromise if we want to pass a bill.

This bipartisan agreement is not perfect, but given all the dangers facing America, it is the comprehensive package our country needs right now. It will provide tens of billions in military assistance for Ukraine so they have more access to Javelins, ammunitions, Stingers, howitzers, and more. It gives Israel the security assistance it needs to resist those who wish to wipe a Jewish State off the map. It delivers life-saving humanitarian assistance—food, water, medicine, clothing—not just for innocent civilians in Gaza but for growing humanitarian needs around the world. And it holds the line against the Chinese Communist Party in the Indo-Pacific.

It has other items we are very proud of too: hundreds of millions for the Nonprofit Security Grant Program to protect synagogues, churches, mosques, HBCUs, and other nonprofit organizations victimized by discrimi-

nation and hate. This is something I have worked very hard to secure for years.

It also includes the FEND Off Fentanyl Act, something we worked very hard on to pass in the Defense authorization bill. We are glad it has been included here.

And, of course, thanks to months and months and months of hard work by Senators MURPHY, SINEMA, LANKFORD, MURRAY, and COLLINS, and our staffs, and many, many others who provided their input, this supplemental package is a real opportunity for Congress to finally address America's borders and make progress toward a more efficient and well-resourced system. It will cut years of delay in the asylum process, while ensuring fair outcomes. It will invest in more frontline personnel and provide more funding for the border.

Make no mistake about it. Fixing our immigration system will not finish with this bill. Democrats will keep fighting to reach our ultimate goal of comprehensive immigration reform.

I believe so strongly in comprehensive reform. As you will recall, I led the Gang of 8 in 2013 to pass it, and we will keep fighting for it once our work on this supplemental is done.

In the coming days, I urge Senators on both sides to think carefully about what is at stake in this legislation. This moment, this bill, the actions here in the next few days are an inflection point in history, where the security of our Nation and of the world hangs in the balance. I know a majority of Senators want to get this done, and I know it will take bipartisan cooperation to move quickly. It is not going to be easy, but Senators owe it to the American people to tune out the political noise coming from the outside and do the right thing for our country—our beloved country.

This moment demands the Senate to show leadership. It harkens back to the decades and moments when Senators did rise to the occasion. It demands the Senate's decisive action. In the coming days, I hope the Senate can, once again, rise to the occasion and lead America forward.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

REMOVING EXTRANEIOUS LOOP-HOLES INSURING EVERY VETERAN EMERGENCY ACT—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I move to proceed to Calendar No. 30, H.R. 815.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 30, H.R. 815, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to make certain improvements relating to the eligibility of veterans to receive reimbursement for emergency treatment furnished through the Veterans Community Care program, and for other purposes.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 30, H.R. 815, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to make certain improvements relating to the eligibility of veterans to receive reimbursement for emergency treatment furnished through the Veterans Community Care program, and for other purposes.

Charles E. Schumer, Patty Murray, Benjamin L. Cardin, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Mark R. Warner, Michael F. Bennet, Catherine Cortez Masto, Margaret Wood Hassan, Richard J. Durbin, Martin Heinrich, Tim Kaine, Kyrsten Sinema, Jack Reed, Angus S. King, Jr., Richard Blumenthal, Christopher Murphy, Brian Schatz.

Mr. SCHUMER. 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. 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.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Republican leader is recognized.

SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, 4 years ago, as a candidate for the Democratic nomination, President Biden promised his base functionally open borders:

I would in fact make sure that . . . we immediately surge to the border all those people who are seeking asylum.

That was President Biden when he took office 3 years ago. As people surged to the border, they insisted that the President had told them to come, and by his actions, we know they were exactly right.

The Biden administration invited a crisis at our southwest border. In the tradition of Washington Democrats dating back decades, they chose an issue over its solution, and then they made it worse. The President of the United States threw out essential border security tools like "Remain in Mexico," froze new funds for common-sense measures like border wall construction, and abandoned the brave men and women of the CPB and ICE to clean up his mess.

President Biden's border crisis has upended life in communities across America. Flows of deadly fentanyl have snuffed out precious lives in States like Kentucky. Catch-and-release has confronted even the bluest so-called sanctuary cities with the harsh realities of unchecked illegal immigration.