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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 21, 2024, at 12 p.m.

Senate

MONDAY, MAY 20, 2024

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.

Eternal Savior, we need You every hour of every day. We not only need You during crisis moments but also in the solitary moments of daily living.

Our lawmakers need You. As they open their hearts to You, fill them with power for today's tasks. Lord, show them Your will for our times and give them the wisdom to say: Speak Lord, for we are listening.

May the inspiration they receive from You keep their hearts pure, their minds clear, their words true, and their deeds compassionate.

And Lord, we pray for the Iranian people, who mourn the death of their President.

We pray in Your loving 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, May 20, 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.

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 of Krissa M. Lanham, of Ari-

zona, to be United States District Judge for the District of Arizona.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

IRAN

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, last night, Iran confirmed that its President and Foreign Minister died in a helicopter crash. The condolences from sympathetic regimes were swift. The PRC declared that the Chinese people had "lost a good friend." The Kremlin mourned "a reliable partner." And Prime Minister Orban of Hungary, whose government has pursued deeper trade relations with Tehran, in spite of Western sanctions, offered his "thoughts and prayers."

Well, I, too, would like to extend my condolences to the people of Iran—for their long suffering under the brutal, theocratic rule of the Islamic Republic. I suspect a great many Iranians would rather Western admirers stop lionizing a man known as the "Butcher of Tehran" for executing political prisoners. They might prefer that foreign leaders not further legitimize the regime that actively represses all of them.

In the meantime, conjecture about key players in the chain of succession and the relative strength of reform and hardline elements has already begun in earnest. To focus on this sort of speculation is to miss something more fundamental about the regime in Tehran, something I warned the Biden administration about when President Raisi was installed through a customary sham

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



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election 3 years ago: We should remember the President of Iran is just a figurehead. The real power rests with the aptly named Supreme Leader and the State institutions he controls.

Supposed “reformers” and “moderates,” along with hard-liners, have come and gone from Iran’s Presidency without fundamentally changing how Tehran operates at home or abroad. Meanwhile, the regime’s revolutionary orthodoxy has endured for decades, preserved by the clerical establishment and the IRGC.

Iran’s leaders, its diplomats, and its enablers abroad can say anything they want about the regime’s character and outlook, but actions speak far louder than words. And, for years, Tehran has moved steadily in just one direction: toward more terrorist violence abroad and more repression at home.

And no matter who Iran’s President has been, the regime in Tehran has continued to engage in rampant proliferation of ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, and UAVs while making steady progress toward nuclear weapons capabilities.

So I would also like to extend my condolences to Iran’s neighbors who still live under the constant threat of a regime that practices what it preaches: Death to Israel, death to America, war on international commerce, and chaos across the Middle East.

The untimely death of the President of Iran does not change the underlying threats this regime poses to its own citizens, to its region, and to the free world. These threats continue to demand our collective attention.

ISRAEL

Madam President, on a related matter, since the immediate aftermath of October 7, Israel, her allies, and Jewish people around the world have faced pernicious efforts to equate a sovereign nation’s self-defense with barbaric acts of terrorism.

We have seen it in the specious media tropes about “cycles of violence,” in university statements bemoaning Israel’s self-defense actions, and in our own elected leaders’ attempts to browbeat Israel’s coalition government for seeking to restore its people’s security.

But today—today—the most noxious attempt at moral equivalence comes from unelected international bureaucrats brandishing a contrived and perverted authority. In the same breath, the self-aggrandizing prosecutor of the International Criminal Court applied for arrest warrants—arrest warrants—for both Hamas’s chief terrorist and Israel’s duly elected Prime Minister.

It is a damning development but not for the supposed subjects of the application. The ICC has succeeded only in discrediting itself even further as a rogue kangaroo court, utterly untethered to morality or justice.

For those who have long rejected this international farce of a Court and its efforts to gobble up jurisdiction, this fact was hardly news. I have refused to acknowledge any ICC authority to con-

duct politicized investigations of American servicemembers, as it has tried illegitimately to do—literally for years.

And weeks ago, several of our colleagues and I warned the institution specifically against lighting any last shred of credibility on fire in an attempt to equate—equate—Hamas’s calculated cruelty with Israel’s right to self-defense.

Putting its ignorance on full display, the judicial junta in The Hague responded by claiming that holding it accountable for this power grab would somehow violate international law.

Unfortunately, there are still plenty here in the Senate and in the administration who need reality to be spelled out more clearly. This isn’t about Prime Minister Netanyahu. It isn’t about so-called international law. In fact, the leader of Israel’s opposition condemned the ICC decision as “a complete moral failure.”

But too many Senate Democrats require frequent reminders of how Israel’s National Unity Government works and what the Israeli people expect of it.

Even as glaring evidence exposed the moral rot and terrorist complicity of another international organization, UNRWA, the Biden administration was reluctant to ignore its loud base of campus radicals and end U.S. funding.

Well, today’s news lays down another gauntlet. It is time for the President and other Western leaders to finally pick it up. Support Israel’s right to defend itself against terrorist savages like Sinwar, reject the fiction that unaccountable bureaucrats in The Hague have any power over a sovereign nation that isn’t a signatory to its authority, commit to imposing significant costs on the Court and its agents if it pursues shameful and baseless charges against Israel, and choose—choose—once and for all between actual justice and the rule of the loud campus mob.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The senior Senator from Illinois.

PRESCRIPTION DRUG COSTS

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, tomorrow the Senate Judiciary Committee—which I chair—will hold a hearing on competition in the prescription drug market and its impact on the prices that Americans pay for medication.

Patients in the United States pay the highest prescription drug prices in the world. Nearly three times what people in other developed countries pay for common medications and sometimes for exactly the same drug as prescribed in America. Take a well-known name, Jardiance, a diabetes treatment—you can almost hear the young lady singing the song, can’t you? It retails for \$700 a month in the United States. Do you know what the exact same drug made by the same company in the same place goes for in Canada? It is \$150. Madam President, \$700 for American citizens; \$150 for Canadians for exactly the same drug.

What is the difference? The difference is the Canadian Government cares, and the Canadian Government started acting years ago to protect the consumers in their country.

The average new cancer drug entering the market last year had an annual list price of more than \$200,000, and the prices keep going up. In 2022, drug manufacturers raised prices on more than 1,200 medications by an average—an average—of 32 percent, four times the rate of inflation.

For patients already facing a gut-wrenching diagnosis, the last thing they should have to worry about is whether they can afford lifesaving treatment. Yet 20 percent of seniors report that the sky-high cost of their medication forces them to skip doses or cut pills.

No drug is more representative of this problem than insulin, the life-or-death drug for those with diabetes. Do you know when it was discovered? One hundred years ago. By Americans? Not this time. Canadian inventors not only found this new, lifesaving drug, they surrendered their patent rights—the rights to control it, and their rights to receive profit from it—for \$1.

Why? They said a life-and-death drug should not be a matter of bargaining, and they believe no one should profit off this lifesaving medicine.

When Eli Lilly launched its insulin product—Humalog—in 1999, a vial cost a modest \$21, but over the next 20 years, the company raised its price more than two dozen times to more than \$330 for a vial.

Thankfully, President Biden and Democrats in Congress capped the price of insulin at \$35 a month under Medicare in the Inflation Reduction Act. It is unfortunate and impossible to explain—not a single Republican joined us in voting for this historic legislation to cap the price of insulin at \$35 a month for Medicare.

Eight pharmaceutical companies raced to the Federal courthouses in the hopes of stopping another component of that bill, which enables Medicare to negotiate for lower drug costs.

Big Pharma participates in the Veterans Health Administration, which has the authority to bargain for lower costs for our veterans, thank goodness. They have had that authority for decades. Yet we heard cries of price controls and socialism from Big Pharma as they opposed letting Medicare simply negotiate a better deal on behalf of senior citizens and taxpayers.

Last fall, President Biden announced the first 10 drugs that would see price reductions from these negotiations. These drugs cost the Medicare Program more than \$50 billion last year alone. When the President announced his list, I am sure many Americans already recognized the names of all 10 popular drugs. Why would we recognize them? Because they are the most heavily advertised drugs on television.

Here is a trivia question you want to take to the next party you attend: How