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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.

Almighty God, Architect and Creator of our destinies, we marvel at Your power, majesty, and might. From the beginning, Your grace has underlain the foundations of our lives, so we ask that You would lead us in the paths of Your purposes.

Today, awaken in our lawmakers the ability to see the opportunities that exist in the challenges they face. May this knowledge motivate them to move forward with faith, optimism, and peace.

Lord, show them unused resources that can be mobilized to solve problems and to make dreams become reality. When they experience doubts and uncertainties, give them the wisdom to ask for Your Guidance.

We pray in Your matchless 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, June 11, 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 will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of David Rosner, of Massachusetts, to be a Member of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission for a term expiring June 30, 2027.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

ISRAEL

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, on Saturday, in a daring daytime raid, Israel rescued four innocent hostages who had suffered in Hamas captivity since October 7. The mission was the

product of careful planning. It demanded the utmost secrecy, professionalism, and bravery. In the case of one elite commander, it required the ultimate sacrifice.

The people of Israel can take pride in their Nation's dedication to restoring its security and delivering justice for the brutal attacks that shattered a quiet Sabbath morning last fall.

Of course, the same operation also exposed even further the tremendous obstacle that continues to threaten Israel's sovereignty and block the prospect of peace for both Israelis and Palestinians. It brought into focus the appalling lengths to which hardened terrorists will go to sow chaos and exploit innocent suffering, and it raised uncomfortable questions about the broader complicity of some Palestinian civilians.

With the help of U.S. intelligence, the Israeli forces' mission led them not to the depths of Hamas terror tunnels but to the heart of a refugee camp run by the United Nations and to the family home of a Hamas terrorist who self-identified as a journalist.

So the brutal exploitation of civilians is a well-documented tactic in Hamas's playbook. These are, after all, the terrorists who repeatedly deploy their weapons and combatants in or beneath schools, hospitals, and mosques in order to use civilians as human shields. The detention of Israeli hostages in family homes is a predictable extension of this despicable practice, and every drop of blood spilt this weekend is the responsibility of the party that violated a cease-fire, launched a barbaric attack, took innocent hostages, and has refused calls from around the world to release them.

These are the basic facts, but predictably, they are not what we read over the weekend in the coverage of Western media. Instead of outrage that a Hamas terrorist would exploit their profession as a cover for hostage-keeping, major publications have directed their indignation at Israel for seeing through 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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terrorists' flimsy cover as doctors and journalists and daring to bring its people home.

One major national newspaper's initial coverage of the raid made no mention of the fact that Hamas had chosen to hide its hostages in private homes. Just days after publishing its own analysis of the bogus casualty reporting of the Hamas-run Gaza Ministry of Health, another outlet reverted to breathlessly parroting the terrorist group's own death toll propaganda in the headlines of its coverage on the hostage rescue. And to the surprise of absolutely no one, the U.N.'s so-called Special Rapporteur on Palestinian human rights shamelessly accused Israel of using hostages to legitimize killing innocent civilians.

If this—if this—is the media diet the American people have to consume, then what came next should surprise no one.

In New York, masked protesters waving Hezbollah flags jeered at visitors to an exhibit honoring the victims of the October 7 attack on the music festival from which the hostages freed this weekend were abducted. Predictably, news broadcasts characterized the protesters, who chanted "Long live the intifada" and "Israel, go to hell," were merely pro-Palestinian, not anti-Israel.

Meanwhile, unhinged throngs of Hamas apologists occupied Lafayette Square, outside the White House, defacing statues, attacking law enforcement, and chanting disgusting anti-Semitic slurs—a generation of useful idiots and fifth columnists adrift on a sea of performative sympathy for terrorists and beyond the reach of fact or reality. Lest anyone doubt, this contagion is not confined to so-called elite universities.

Americans who are rightly worried about crime and violence may wonder why on Earth the President would permit this lawlessness on Federal property, let alone the park outside the White House, or why no arrests were made. They especially ought to wonder why the Biden administration chose this moment, as the people of Israel celebrated a small but precious victory in securing the freedom of four of its citizens, to try to box Israel in with a stunt—a stunt—vote at the U.N. and why the White House so desperately wants to constrain our ally's freedom of movement and to micromanage its military.

This weekend's developments may feel like a significant inflection point, but the fundamental realities of this situation have not changed. Israel has a right to defend itself. Terrorists have no right to take innocent hostages, and they alone—they alone—bear responsibility for the consequences of their actions.

JUDICIAL NOMINATIONS

Mr. President, on another matter, I haven't spared any breath calling attention to the parade of unfit nominees that the Biden administration would like to see confirmed to lifetime seats on the Federal bench.

I have urged my colleagues to consider Adeel Mangi's alarming connections to terrorist sympathizers and Nancy Maldonado's record of staggering unproductivity in the lower court. So it is only fitting that I call attention to another nominee whose affiliations bear all the hallmarks of the dark money influence that so animates some of our senior-most colleagues on the Judiciary Committee.

The Senate hears a great deal from our colleague the junior Senator from Rhode Island on the subject of dark money, but so far, I haven't heard him express any concern that Sparkle Sooknanan, nominated to the DC Circuit Court, has secured the support of Robert Raben.

Mr. Raben, of course, is a notorious shepherd of liberal nominees whose client list reads like a who's-who of liberal dark money, with groups backed by everyone from George Soros to Arabella Advisors.

Apparently, this nominee engaged in a discussion with Mr. Raben and his associates after—after—her nomination was announced. This sort of contact between liberal nominees and liberal handlers doesn't fit with the Senate Democrats' idea of dark money influence as simply a conservative pastime.

So it is hardly surprising that senior members of the Judiciary Committee's majority haven't found time to scrutinize Ms. Sooknanan with the sort of vigor they devote to tarring organizers for conservative causes.

Of course, maybe Senate Democrats actually support Ms. Sooknanan's legal defense of so-called vulture funds as they cut to the front of the line of Puerto Rico's creditors.

One Democratic House Member from New York says the success makes her nomination "an insult to the people of Puerto Rico." Ah, but what does she know?

Or maybe they agree with Ms. Sooknanan's supposedly conservative former law firm that she didn't disparage the former President's election-litigation efforts on a conference call and that the New York Times is simply lying when they say that she did.

It just doesn't add up, unless the real ledger being used is the one with liberal dark money from Robert Raben and Arabella Advisors.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

NOVA MUSIC FESTIVAL EXHIBITION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, last Friday, I had the opportunity to visit the Nova exhibit in New York City, downtown on Wall Street.

The exhibit documents what happened on October 7. Thousands of beautiful young people gathered, as the Sun was setting, at a music festival. When you go into the exhibit, the first thing you see is thousands of young people dancing, embracing each other, and as happy as can be—young people, beautiful, in the prime of their lives, the

Sun shining on them as it was setting—only to realize what had happened.

The rest of the exhibit documents the brutal murder of these young people—innocent, happy, young people with so much of their lives in front of them. We see vicious Hamas terrorists machine-gunning, brutalizing, and we hear interviews that are done by the families and those who were there.

So it was a wrenching experience, the contrast—this exhibit was so well done—of those beautiful young people, happily enjoying life and then knowing that hundreds of them would be slain brutally and scores of them would be kidnapped by terrorists, running away in fear.

What was even worse—or at least adding salt into the wound—was that just a day or two after I visited the exhibit, protesters gathered outside the exhibit, chanting repugnant anti-Semitic phrases, donning banners that read: "Long Live October 7th," and "The Zionists are not Jews and not humans." How low can you go?

Having visited the exhibit and seeing those young people, then knowing and seeing on film what happened to them at the vicious hands of Hamas, and then having people come outside and protest and say "Long Live October 7th"; "The Zionists are not Jews and not humans"—how repugnant, how despicable, how terribly unnerving that humanity could sink that low.

It is the lowest of low for anyone to protest an exhibit dedicated to honoring the memory of precious lives that were brutally murdered by Hamas. It is sick that anyone should show up at an exhibit like this to protest.

The protest and the vitriolic rhetoric outside the Nova exhibit were nothing short of despicable, inhumane, and anti-Semitic. Anti-Semitism, like what occurred outside the Nova Music Festival Exhibition, has no place in our city, in our State, or in America.

RIGHT TO IVF ACT

Now, Mr. President, it has been 2 years since Donald Trump and the MAGA Republicans succeeded in eliminating Roe, ripping away the right to choose and jeopardizing reproductive care for millions upon millions of women.

Today, women and families across America are worried about more than Roe's demise. They are worried about what comes next, including the erosion of reproductive freedoms nobody thought were at risk. This includes access to services like IVF.

Eighty-six percent of Americans support IVF. But in the aftermath of Roe and after frightening decisions like the one from Alabama, many families fear that this basic service cannot be taken for granted.

That is not theoretical. Here in Congress, some on the hard right are already trying to restrict IVF access. The Senate can ease people's worries and protect their freedoms through legislation.